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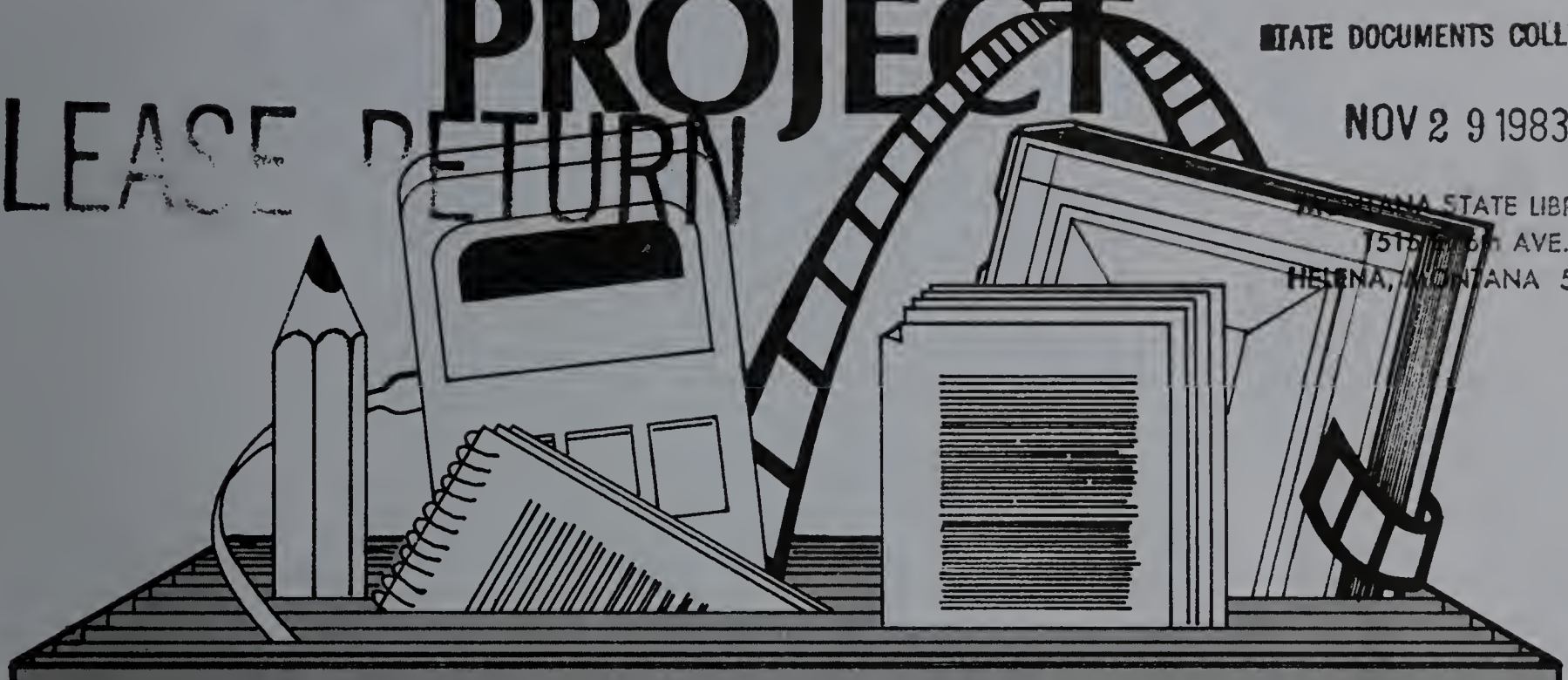

Final Report for the

National Historical Publications and Records Commission

Report prepared by the Montana Historical Records Council 1982

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GOVERNOR

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A MESSAGE FROM GOVERNOR TED SCHWINDEN

On behalf of the people of the State of Montana, I take this opportunity to thank the National Historic Publications and Records Commission for providing the funding which made this project possible. As a result of the Montana Historical Records Assessment Project, it will now be possible to effectively plan action to correct weaknesses in this State's historic records program.

The results of the project demonstrate that, despite the efforts of dedicated and hard-working records keepers, much is yet to be done if we are to preserve and make available this written heritage. The report points to the accomplishments of professional and volunteer staff, but it also calls for increased cooperation between state and local officials, as well as expanded educational and training opportunities for all those who manage our records.

I support, and I certainly urge all Montanans to support, the Montana Historical Records Council as it undertakes to reverse mistakes of the past and to establish improved procedures for the future.

Sincerely,

TED SCHWINDEN
Governor

MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

225 NORTH ROBERTS STREET • (406) 449-2694 • HELENA, MONTANA 59620-9990

This report provides an accurate and careful assessment of the status of Montana's rich documentary heritage. In brief, it details the ongoing process of deterioration which is effecting our written records.

On the positive side the report underscores the richness of Montana's records and it makes specific recommendations for future actions which can be made to identify, preserve and make accessible this fragile portion of our heritage. This assessment is a vital guide to future decisionmaking and planning.

On behalf of the Montana Historical Society I extend gratitude to the National Historical Publications and Records Commission for financial support, and to Mr. William Summers who is primarily responsible for the Montana Historical Records Assessment.

Robert Archibald
Director
Montana Historical Society

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PREFACE BY THE STATE ARCHIVIST AND PROJECT COORDINATOR

Montana's size and its relative isolation have caused problems in identification and preservation of the state's historical records. Only in the 1970s have strides been taken to address many of these problems.

The creation of a Historical Records Advisory Council in Montana and its subsequent formulation of a Priority Plan for the state have given impetus to these recent efforts to modernize care of historical records, whether private or public in nature. The opportunity to receive funding to perform a records assessment project was of real importance in Montana. With few professional records keepers, long distances, and a relatively large number of repositories to visit, such a project would not have been otherwise possible.

The project has been of extreme value to the state's Historical Records Advisory Council. It has provided information and suggested directions for the future, it has allowed us to establish contact with a myriad of people who have responsibility for historical records, and it has given the first opportunity to further basic education for untrained records keepers throughout the state.

The two most obvious conclusions that can be drawn from the survey are the need for better state-local government cooperation and the need to provide a wide variety of basic information on records care and use to those who work with records but are untrained in the field.

This report will serve as a long-term planning document and represents a major step in the direction of addressing records problems. We are grateful for NHPRC support of this study.

Brian Cockhill

Brian Cockhill
State Archivist
Project Coordinator,
Montana Historical Records Assessment
Project

REPORT BY THE PROJECT FIELD ARCHIVIST

December 20, 1982

The immediate problem of assessing the condition of Montana's historical records was to determine where the records are held. Questionnaires were developed to be sent to the "traditional" records repositories (city halls, county courthouses, historical societies and museums, and public libraries) with the intention of discovering whether in fact these institutions hold historical archival material, and, if so, in what quantities and under what conditions.

It was expected that some on-site assessments would be necessary to substantiate the findings of the questionnaires. However, I quickly discovered that the staffs of local repositories were unfamiliar with what constitutes archival material. As a result, the responses to the questionnaires were frequently misleading, and I realized that it was necessary to contact personally as many repositories as possible.

Within the course of the year, I traveled to sixty-three towns and cities, visiting ten county courthouses, three city halls, sixty-three historical associations and museums, six archives and libraries, and four school districts. Doing this required driving approximately 7,472 miles.

The Montana Historical Records Council was to meet in February, 1982, to discuss the Project, but the meeting was cancelled due to inclement weather. The Council met in Great Falls in August, 1982, to review the initial findings. In the interim, the Council was advised by mail of the Project's progress.

The Project Steering Committee (composed of Project Coordinator Brian Cockhill, University of Montana Archivist Dale Johnson, and Montana State University Archivist Jean Schmidt) was kept abreast of developments by phone, letters, and meetings. The Steering Committee made a number of suggestions and actively contributed to the direction of the Assessment Project.

The required public hearing was held in Billings on December 16, 1982. The attendance (only four institutions were represented) was disappointing. Winter travel conditions were to some degree to blame, but ultimately it was that the preservation and accessibility of historical records are not burning issues to most. Though reversing the mistakes of the past and establishing improved management techniques in the future will be an arduous and frustrating task, we must continue to work for a closer relationship between the major archives and local government officials, increase professional skills through educational outreach, up-date statutes pertaining to records management, and, above all, generate public awareness of the importance of historical records.

Bill Summers
Field Archivist
Montana Historical Records
Assessment Project

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1982

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INTRODUCTION

Background

In 1976, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) invited each state to submit a statement of priorities and plans for a historical records program. By 1978, the Montana Historical Records Council was able to respond with a planning document which focused on the immediate needs of this state's historical records operation. The Council concluded that it would be necessary to concentrate on the problem of locating and preserving historical records on the local level, specifically records held by local historical societies and museums, libraries, and local government. The Council also advised that a survey of these small repositories should be a prerequisite to instituting remedial practices.

The NHPRC discovered that across the nation the general feeling of most archivists was that, "there must be a survey before there is a system."[1] Therefore, in 1981, the Commission invited the State Historical Records Councils to apply for a grant, "to assess historical records conditions and needs in (their respective state), to prepare recommendations as to how these might be met, and to report the findings and recommendations to the interested public."[2] Under the auspices of the Montana Historical Society, Montana applied for and was granted funding of $22,872 to carry out such a survey. The State Archivist was designated coordinator of the project and a field archivist was hired.

The initial task was to establish criteria which would allow the field archivist to examine firsthand the holdings of the local repositories in the nation's fourth largest state. Only those institutions which generated or maintained material of value to historical research and which allowed public access to that material would be assessed. This principle excluded the holdings of labor unions and commercial or industrial enterprises. Only those religious denominations with institutional archives were to be included. All county and incorporated municipal governments and all the state's public and college libraries would be sent questionnaires.

The questionnaires were designed to address the particular functions of the respective institution or governing body. To encourage response, the format was kept short and direct. The questionnaire sought to reveal the nature of the institutions' records collections, the acquisition policies, the conditions of storage. Copies of the questionnaires are included in the Appendix of this report with a collation of the survey results.

A disappointing response to the survey (23.7%) resulted in a decision by the coordinator that the field archivist would personally contact every historical organization and museum and "targeted" local libraries and government repositories to determine the nature, quality, and condition of their holdings.

It is important to emphasize here that the field archivist was only able to note the types of records found on the local level and their condition of storage. An inventory of real value to researchers must, of course, be more extensive and detailed.

The Value of Archival Documents

Archival material is often referred to as a "primary source." This is to say that it is derived directly from the person or event being studied. It is the raw material that documents the life of government, commercial enterprises, institutions, or families. Its only bias is that of the originator. It is to be differentiated from library or "secondary sources" in that it is unpublished. The scope of archival documents includes personal diaries and correspondence, financial records, minute books, baptismal and marriage records, school records, maps and plats, photographs, blueprints, public records, etc. This material retains an enduring immediacy and for this reason is especially valued by researchers.

It is a fragile treasure. It is susceptible to fire and flood, vermin, humidity, light, frequent or improper handling, and the deterioration of the paper itself. Proper storage assures a longer life for these records and for the information they hold. If it is to survive, a chief concern of the research community must be the identification and preservation of this information.

Identification and preservation are the first steps in a lengthy process. Once the documents are housed and protected, they must be made accessible to researchers. Inaccessible records are merely artifacts with no research value. The researcher must be able to get to the information which means that the document must be inventoried, indexed, and catalogued.

Montana's records heritage is a rich, but endangered one. There is no way to calculate the mass of documentation which has been discarded over the years by an uninformed public. The stories of tons of records being dumped into rivers and buried in landfills are all too common. Many records have been disposed of during the move by local officials from an old to a new courthouse. Many are destroyed when a business changes hands. Not a few are being irreparably damaged by improper storage in basements and attics. The results of the Montana Historical Records Assessment Project indicate that there survives documentation of many facets of our history. However, quantities are stored in such a way as to jeopardize their usefulness or impair access. It has become imperative that concerned Montanans actively aid in the preservation of our paper legacy.

REPORT SUMMARY

Findings

In order to determine the location, scope, and quality of storage facilities of the various repositories, questionnaires were mailed to Montana libraries, museums and historical societies, county and municipal officials, and to a number of selected school districts. As noted earlier, the response was disappointing. This in itself seems to reflect a widespread unawareness of the importance and variety of uses of unpublished documents beyond that of their origin. It appears to reflect, too, the traditional distrust of state functionaries who are seen as involving themselves in what are historically regarded as local affairs. Furthermore, it became apparent that many who work with historical materials are unable to distinguish records from artifacts or manuscripts from printed matter. This is certainly due, in large part, to the volunteer staffing of the nongovernmental repositories. The results of the survey are to be found in the Appendix of this report.

The assumptions formed as a result of the questionnaire were borne out by the on-site visits by the field archivist. Montana statute governs closely the disposition of most state-generated records. However, the field archivist discovered on his inspection of local government storage areas that inactive county and municipal records are too often maintained or disposed of in a haphazard fashion. Those entrusted with maintaining and preserving these records are burdened with the ubiquitous limitations of space, budget, and professional expertise, exacerbated by unenforced guidelines, incomplete retention schedules, apparent apathy on the part of some state offices, and local mistrust of central authority. Furthermore, there is very little understanding or appreciation on the part of the general public of the staggering responsibilities with which these officials are charged.

Courthouses: There are many interesting, historically valuable record series extant in Montana courthouse attics and basements, housed too frequently in lamentable conditions. Many of these records could shed light on the state's homestead boom and bust, early road systems, evolving health and welfare services, as well as trends in Montana's corporate enterprises. Correspondingly, quantities of useless vouchers and warrants occupy valuable storage space for want of a rigorously enforced retention schedule. Records which have continual public use suffer torn pages and other casualties. Well-intentioned clerks have in some cases used a plastic laminate to preserve old records, unaware that such material can actually shorten the life of paper. A number of county officials have purchased microfilm, unmindful that there are several microfilm processing procedures, some better than others. Improper storage and incomplete washing of microfilm are the two major contributors to microfilm deterioration, yet many clerks

are not familiar with these threats to their microfilmed records.[3]

Schools: School records, rich in historical, but sensitive information, are oftentimes unlawfully out of the hands of the proper authorities. They are commonly found in the manuscript holdings of local museums and have even been used as artifacts in historical exhibits.

Libraries: A number of hard-working librarians across the state have established and sustained vertical files on local history subjects. Manuscript material can be found among the newspaper clippings and ephemera that constitute the bulk of these files. While the librarians have made a diligent effort to rescue what they can, limited time, budgets, and technical training, again, have prevented their making full use of these primary resources. This appraisal of the state's libraries is based on information gathered from this project's questionnaire and on-site assessment. It corroborates the results of an earlier canvass of libraries published in the "Northwest Regional Archival Needs Study: Final Report" (November, 1981) which attested to a general need for archival training. Relevant portions are included in the Appendix of this report.

Local Historical Societies and Museums: Groups of concerned Montanans formed out of a mutual interest in our past have proven to be principal, if unconscious, instruments in the preservation of this state's written heritage. The vast majority of local historical societies and museums have no formal archives, designated storage areas, processed collections, and active acquisitions functions. They do not recognize themselves as records repositories, but rather see themselves in their primary capacity as museums or associations to foster appreciation of local history. Nevertheless they maintain collectively an impressive quantity of manuscript materials. These records constitute a conglomeration of public and private documents covering, for the most part, the years from early statehood to the mid-twentieth century. There is a problem, however, in that this material is not made available for research. Volunteer, non-professional staff members are rarely trained to carry out the required functions to make historical records accessible. And, because only a very small handful of the state's historical societies and museums report their holdings to any central source, a researcher must travel to a location in order to determine if the needed resources are available.

Conservation (that is, measures taken to repair or restore documents) is a precise and exacting operation which should only be undertaken by experts with the proper equipment. Preservation (the procedures taken to protect, care, and maintain manuscripts) can be practiced on the local level after only minimal instruction. Montana's local historical societies and museums are in need of this sort of guidance.

Major Repositories: The strengths of the state's major repositories are generally held to be mining, politics, and corporate enterprise (Montana Historical Society Archives, Helena); the lumber industry and politics (University of Montana Mansfield Library Archives/Special Collections, Missoula); and twentieth-century agriculture (Montana State University Renne Library Archives and Special Collections, Bozeman). There are, of course, important exceptions to these generalizations since each repository accessions wide varieties of manuscripts. The Guide to Manuscripts in Montana Repositories (Cockhill and Johnson: 1973), despite its being out-of-date, provides an overview of primary sources available in the state. The major institutions are assessed in much greater depth later in this report.

Needs Assessment

The obvious immediate needs of the local public record repositories include well-enforced, clear, concise, and comprehensive retention schedules, strong guidelines for the use of microfilm, and technical advice on storage and maintenance of retained records. It will also be necessary to insure that public records are physically and intellectually accessible to the public. These needs can be met through short- and long-range corrective measures: through legislation, through systematic collaboration between local officials and the State Archives in workshops and other educational exchanges, and through permanent, full-time state field personnel assigned, in part, to work with local officials in the implementation of effective archives/records management practices.

The staffs of local historical societies and museums need to be educated about the nature and uses of archival material. A contractual association between these institutions and the state's major repositories could provide the necessary instruction and guidance, and, at the same time, insure that records of special value for historical research would be preserved and made accessible to the research public. The field personnel mentioned above, and delegated to work with local government officials, would also develop a similar advisory relationship with local historical groups.

The proposed contractual association between the state's repositories is a logical extension of the "network cooperative approach" proposed in the "Statement of Priorities and Preferred Approaches for the Historical Records Program in the State of Montana" submitted to the NHPRC by the Montana Historical Records Advisory Council in November, 1978. (See the Appendix.)

Summary of Recommendations

A purpose of the NHPRC State Historical Records Assessment and Reporting Projects is to establish a, "set of recommendationsfor action to improve current conditions in the immediate future...(and) in the long run."[4] Below is a summary of the proposed recommendations of the Montana Historical Records Advisory Council in its meeting in Great Falls on August 31, 1982. An expanded version appears in the body of this report.

Short-range agenda:

Networking:

The first priority should be the creation of a coordinated network of Montana's repositories to preserve and make accessible to the research community Montana's historical documentation.

Educational Outreach:

Workshops should be set up on a regional basis throughout the state to provide instruction for librarians and the staffs of local historical societies and museums in the establishment and operation of small archival holdings.

Central Data Base:

The Montana Historical Society should act as a central bank of information about all the collections of historical records in the state, regardless of location. The data base should include holdings in the small, as well as the major repositories.

Conservation:

A central conservation service should be established which would provide consultation to all repositories regarding the assessment, storage, and remedial treatment of damaged or endangered materials. The conservation service should coordinate its efforts with the conservation of museum artifacts in order to enhance its effectiveness.

Guide to Collections:

The Guide to Manuscripts in Montana Repositories (Cockhill and Johnson, 1973) should be updated.

Long-Range Agenda:

Legislation:

Montana must update its legislation, "to provide for an orderly, uniform, state-wide system for the retention and preservation of historical resources on a manageable basis and under professional care."[5] Legislation would require effective records scheduling and the use of Montana's colleges as regional repositories. Models for such legislation are provided by Georgia, Texas, Wisconsin, and others.

Staffing:

A full-time records management consultant/field archivist position should be added to the Montana Historical Society to provide consultation to local government officials regarding the management and preservation of public records. This staff person would also monitor compliance with the records retention statutes and would be available, as well, to work with local historical museums and organizations in the establishment of local archives.

STATEWIDE FINDINGS

This project provided information on a total of twenty-seven historical societies and museums, twenty-three libraries, and three genealogical societies functioning as repositories of historical records. In addition, historically valuable records are generated and maintained in each of Montana's fifty-six county courthouses, 125 incorporated municipalities, and 566 public school districts. The following summarizes the assessment of Montana's non-governmental and governmental repositories.

Staffing:

Of the forty non-governmental institutions which responded to the inquiry regarding their staffing, thirty-one (75%) maintained full-time staffs with an average of 2.2 paid or volunteer workers per staff. Thirty-two (80%) of those responding operate with an average of eleven volunteer or paid part-time staff.

There are four repositories in the state with at least one full-time paid archivist: the Montana Historical Society Archives (5 archivists, 2 archival technicians), the University of Montana Mansfield Library Archives/Special Collections (1 archivist), Montana State University Renne Library Archives and Special Collections (1 archivist), the city-county archives of Butte-Silver Bow (1 archivist). Three institutions maintain archives with a part-time archives staff: the Catholic Diocese of Great Falls/Billings (1 archivist), the Catholic Diocese of Helena (1 historian/archivist), the United Methodist Church of Montana Archives (1 archivist). There are an additional five institutions that have designated archival collections, but are operated on a part-time basis by volunteer or librarian personnel: the United Church of Christ, Montana Conference; Eastern Montana College of Billings; Northern Montana College of Havre; Montana College of Mineral Science and Technology of Butte; and Carroll College of Helena. Three local historical societies are in the process of establishing archives with non-archivist volunteer staffs: Cascade County Historical Society of Great Falls, Carbon County Historical Society of Red Lodge, and the Tri-County Historical Society based in Anaconda. The remaining thirty-eight repositories may be termed "informal" in that, while they hold a variety of historical records, they do not recognize or process those documents as research sources.

Archives Training:

The University of Montana offers through the Department of History a course in archives procedures open to both undergraduates and graduate students. The Montana Historical Society cooperates with Carroll College

History Department in a training course for upper-level undergraduates in processing archival collections. Records management training is available through the Business Department at the University of Montana. Both Montana State University and the University of Montana provide history courses which require extensive research in local government records.

Holdings:

No state-wide survey has been undertaken since the uncompleted Historical Records Survey funded by the Works Project Administration in 1939. The only current information is on the three major archives. The Montana Historical Society stores approximately 5,500 cubic feet of manuscripts together with some 4,300 cubic feet of State Archives. The University of Montana holds about 6,450 linear feet and Montana State University has on deposit roughly 6,000 cubic feet of historical records.

Preservation of Holdings:

The majority of Montana's repositories have made little or no effort to preserve their paper holdings against the effects of improper handling or storage. Some well-intentioned public officials have had old or frequently used records laminated, an irreversible process which actually shortens the life-span of the paper. Montana is fortunate, however, in having a generally cool, dry climate which has enabled certain records to be preserved through benign neglect. Only the Montana Historical Society and the University of Montana have even the most limited facilities for conducting a conservation program. The staff of the Montana Historical Society is available in an advisory capacity, and in limited circumstances, for on-site assistance in the case of fire or flood damage to records.

Collecting Records:

With the exceptions noted in the following assessments of the state's major public archives, local historical societies and museums collect records in an almost inadvertent manner: as a part of larger museum acquisitions, as antiquarian oddities, or for the genealogical information they might hold. Acquisition of records in this manner precludes a purposeful and directed policy. Consequently, records have found their way to these repositories in a piecemeal fashion. Record series are interrupted or incomplete; complementary material may be missing altogether; the principle of provenance violated or simply ignored altogether.[6]

A prevailing attitude among Montanans seems to dictate that to be "historical" an item must have originated in the period before the First World War. This is a curious outlook indeed for a state less than a

century old! As a result, many records reflecting directly on this century are neglected or disregarded on the local level.

The major repositories are restrained by limited funding and staff from instituting a trenchant acquisitions network which would require extensive fieldwork. Such a program would serve to fill gaps in collections, and at the same time, alter opinions about the definition of history.

Description of Holdings:

The Guide to Manuscripts in Montana Repositories (Cockhill and Johnson, University of Montana Library, Missoula, 1973) requires updating. Internal guides are available to the holdings of the Montana Historical Society, the University of Montana, and Montana State University.

Publication of Historical Documents:

Not in Precious Metals Alone, compiled and edited by the Montana Historical Society (Montana Historical Society Press, 1976) as part of the national bicentennial observance, represents the solitary, though significant, effort to publish historical documents in Montana.

The Montana Historical Society press has published five titles since its inception in 1976. The Society plans to publish an additional one to two non-fiction titles annually, including guides to the Montana Historical Society collections, educational material aimed at grade school and high school use, scholarly and popular works. It may be assumed that much of the research will be based upon the materials held by the Society.

Montana, the Magazine of Western History, the quarterly publication of the Montana Historical Society, frequently includes articles based upon manuscript collections held by the Society.

Local Government: Questionnaire

Thirty-eight municipal and county governments responded to the questionnaire (21%). This is, in itself, a tenuous base upon which to derive an understanding of the needs of local records keepers.

Nevertheless, the results of the inquiry cannot be disregarded out of hand. That there were few replies indicates a lack of interest in the historical value of locally generated records. The argument can be made, too, that the small number of returned questionnaires reflects the traditional distrust by local officials of state government. Any future effort by the Montana Historical Records Council to plan a historic records program should be undertaken with these factors well in mind.

A number of questionnaires were completed thoughtfully and in a concerned manner. Some of the responses point consistently to certain areas of concern: storage, microfilming, retention schedules, and a need for remedial action. Eighty-nine percent of the counties and seventy-three percent of the municipalities returning the completed form expressed interest in assistance with inadequate storage facilities. Fifty-six percent of the counties and thirty-three percent of the towns and cities were concerned that microfilming programs be established. In all, sixty-nine percent of the counties and fifty percent of the municipalities made clear that the state should provide services to local governments, citing specific records management problems.

Local Government: On-Site Assessment

The field archivist visited eleven county courthouses (three small, three intermediate, and five large). All of the counties visited had responded to the questionnaire. Because of time limitations, the assessment focused upon the records held by the county clerk, the primary records keeper, although in most cases, storage facilities proved to hold a conglomeration of materials from the various county offices.

Without exception, the core of the county clerks' holdings (i.e., the most frequently used records pertaining to finances, voter registration, mineral and water rights, personal and real property, etc.) are well-ordered and accessible for public use.

Problems do occur, however. The volumes of recorded materials are often frayed from overuse. Plats and maps are too often rolled in storage and particularly susceptible to damage by patrons. Microfilm is increasingly utilized by clerks, but sometimes the quality of the film processing is poor.

County clerks, however, are the first to decry the conditions in which county records must be housed. The areas designated for storage are usually in basements and, because of staffing limitations, are little more than dumping grounds for paper. Retrieval becomes a problem.

County clerks are eager to receive consultation on general records management practices, and are quick to express dismay at the lack of a comprehensive records retention schedule for the variety of series they are required to maintain. They are, nevertheless, extremely reluctant to give up material which, though without current administrative, legal, or fiscal value, may be historically important.

The field assessment included visits to three municipalities (one small, one intermediate, one large). The permanent records generated

and maintained by city clerks are not on the scale of those of a county clerk. Long-term record series include city council minutes, ordinances, etc. Storage space in smaller communities is usually a converted closet off the clerk's office. Missing volumes of city council minutes are a recurrent problem. Since microfilming is rare in most Montana towns, the records are lost forever.

ASSESSMENT

Local Government Records Management

There are fifty-six counties in Montana ranging in size from Yellowstone County (population 108,035) to Petroleum County (population 655). The Montana Constitution of 1972 expanded and formalized a movement towards greater autonomy, reversing the traditional nineteenth-century view of counties as mere extensions of state government. More and more counties are providing a wider spectrum of services beyond their conventional functions including the variety of independent special districts for hospitals, public housing, drainage, fire protection, parks, etc. Archivists, members of the research community, and records keepers alike should be aware of this development and its implications for the types of records which will document this transition in the future.

Paralleling this expansion of function is the increased sophistication of record keeping. Gone are the days of heavy, over-sized, leather-bound volumes filled with pages of handwritten copy. Handwriting was replaced by typewriting, which was in turn supplanted by photostatic pages. Today, counties are increasingly relying upon microfilm. A few have turned to machine-readable technology, certainly the information storage method of the future, offering the archivist and the scholar new possibilities and new frustrations. As Montana counties enter the new age of recordkeeping, records processors and users alike must be exposed to training in preparation for appraising, arranging, and preserving machine-readable records.

The storage areas in Montana's county courthouses are our, "cupboard of unspoiled goodies, often peeked at or smelled by the curious, occasionally fondled and nibbled by amateur historians and genealogists, sometimes prepared and served up on a delectable platter by scholars. A smorgasbord of manuscripts, the richness of which is concealed by their classification as simply 'old records'."[7] Among the staples are registers of warrants and disbursements. There is the more exotic "Burial of Deceased Soldiers" and petitions for the creation of a new county, as well as the historically valuable jail registers, health board minutes, school censuses, county school superintendent's reports, poor fund registers, etc.

Problems can arise from the fact that many of the record series titles are unique to a particular time and county, and can vary within the same series. Thus, a particular sort of information might be obtained from a number of different record series titles depending upon the county or the year. This common, but disconcerting, practice was noticed by the field workers carrying out the Historical Records Survey[8] and should be taken into account by both those who manage and make use of these documents.

As delightful as our "smorgasbord of manuscripts" might be, we must remember that much of its usefulness is only in its potential use.

Information which is physically or intellectually inaccessible is of little value. Clerks who have spent years in office are usually able to retrieve a particular record, but the effort is time-consuming and therefore expensive, and success is irregular. Records are generally stored on wood shelves in the courthouse basement or attic, seldom in sequential order within a particular series. Physical access is further frustrated by double-shelving or stacking volumes. Basement storage is especially prone to flood or to damage by broken water or steam pipes. Flooding has actually damaged or destroyed county records at least twice in this year alone.

The Inventory of Archives Project of the Historical Records Survey noted in its reports that courthouses built in the last century were constructed, "without anticipation of present day (i.e., 1936) needs," resulting in, "congested storage space."[9] The observation could be amended to include many of the courthouses built as public works projects during the Depression. Most county clerks could present compelling arguments that the condition of their storage areas is becoming increasingly frightening.

The storage predicament is compounded by the volume of outdated materials. Not every document has historical value. In a courthouse, as in private enterprise, there is much duplication and a mass of paper which, having served its immediate purpose, should not be kept. A plethora of such documentation is actually an impediment to serious research and a burden upon the records manager who must find room for it.

This surfeit of paper matter filling valuable space is in most cases a direct result of inadequate retention scheduling for county records. The county clerk and recorder is mentioned literally thousands of times in Montana statute, usually in regards to some record which must pass through that office. There is no corresponding statute, however, dictating how long that record must be retained. The effect of this is that valuable records must compete for space with useless paper.

They must also compete for care. Storage space clogged with records is often dusty and generally ill-kept. The time is simply not available for giving the records the attention they need. Storing records in acid-free folders and boxes becomes prohibitively expensive with such volume. There are repository rooms which clerks may not see for months or years.

If the problems of disaster, space, and preservation of important records are to be ameliorated, local government officials and state agencies must cooperate to create retention schedules which are practical and enforceable.

To date no Montana county has a specific budget for records management personnel. Missoula County has initiated a program staffed by a university student intern to assess the condition of stored county records and to make recommendations for their retention or disposition. Missoula county

has also worked with the University of Montana Library Archives in the transferral of certain historical county records to the University. Lewis and Clark County has begun to consult with the Montana Historical Society Archives before disposing of its old records and has turned over to the Society approximately fifty cubic feet of historical documentation during the course of this project. The clerk and recorder of Choteau County has consulted with the State Archivist regarding better use of existing storage space. These are important examples of a growing awareness on the part of local government officials that the records they manage have historical value. But these examples also reflect a piecemeal progress, without central direction or uniformity.

The records held by schools were given only a cursory examination. The superficial nature of the assessment was not a result of the lack of significance of the school records. An authority on the use of local records observes: "Lucky is the county or municipality that has preserved the records of its public education system, for the story of education in America has not been fully told. The surviving records are rich in untapped data both for biographical use and for the broader study of public education."[10]

An especially poor response from Montana's school boards makes it difficult to draw trustworthy conclusions. Many of those who did respond expressed candid disapproval of what they considered to be over-regulation by state and federal agencies and were equally forthright in their opposition to any new regulation. The few clerks and superintendents responding did, however, consistently request assistance in the microfilming and storage of school records.

The field archivist made only seven on-site visits to schools or to superintendents' offices. His assessments confirm, however, that there is a wide-spread lack of storage space. One school district keeps its non-current records in random order in a basement vault accessible only through the girls' locker room. While state statute requires that abandoned or annexed school districts deposit their records with the county superintendent or with the superintendent of the enlarged school district, the enforcement of this procedure is evidently lax. School records are not uncommonly found in local historical societies and museums, and many series maintained by the central offices are missing volumes.

There is a new concern on the part of school administrators that all school records dealing with students be restricted from public use. This, of course, is the result of more stringent legislation designed to protect the students' privacy. While this may make for greater vigilance in the management of those records, it may also result in withholding all records from researchers. Certainly this must be an area requiring attention by archivists and researchers in the very near future.[11]

Libraries and Archives

Questionnaires were mailed to eighty-eight Montana libraries, including four private religious archives. Many of these libraries are branches of county libraries, serving small communities for a few hours a week. The intent of the questionnaire was, in part, to discover which of the state's libraries also held manuscript collections or other historic documents of local interest.

Twenty-three libraries (25%) responded to this questionnaire. Thirteen of those (65%) maintained some historical records, either as special collections or as part of vertical files. The field archivist visited eight libraries and archives (including four which did not respond to the questionnaire). Those librarians who have made efforts to collect and make available to the public historical manuscripts and records are eager to participate in workshop training sessions on archives management.

Response to the two questionnaires and on-site visits established that Montana librarians, especially those who manage historical manuscripts and records, have strong professional interest in developing archival skills through workshops and in-service staff education. Preservation of existing material is regarded as an immediate need. Archival or original source materials must be processed and organized quite differently than library or published materials. Librarians across the state are aware of this and are anxious to learn techniques which will enable them to handle their archival collections within the limitations of their staffing and funding.

There are general weaknesses which must be overcome in order to make local collections more available to researchers. For example, only one percent of those responding to the survey report their holdings to a central source. And only eight archives have catalogued their collections.[12] These weaknesses make many research projects outside the major repositories probitively expensive.

Local Historical Societies and Museums

"A Guide to Montana Museums, Art Centers, and Historical Organizations" (Montana Historical Society, 1982), the most current and comprehensive register, lists seventy historical societies and museums. Questionnaires were mailed to each of these; twenty-nine (41%) responded.

Interestingly, almost thirty percent of those who returned the questionnaire indicated that they did not have manuscript or non-published materials in their collections. On-site visits, however, established that a full ninety percent had accumulated historic records. This would indicate that most historical societies and museums do not recognize archival

material, except in its use as artifacts. Most museums have catalogued their historic records and documents as they would artifacts and they are commonly displayed as such. (Any archival matter so displayed should be so only for short periods and only when protected against damage by light and wear. Any important information contained in the material should be copied so as to have it available for research.)

As a consequence only a small handful of museums have taken steps to separate paper. This problem is further compounded by the failure to report holdings to a central source. Only the three major archives report regularly to the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections. The holdings of Eastern Montana College were included in the 1973 "Guide to Manuscripts in Montana Repositories," which is in need of updating. It is no exaggeration to say that such a situation makes serious research virtually impossible outside of the major Montana archives.

Storage is seldom a problem for local historical museums and associations. Their manuscript collections are generally small, and because they are handled as artifacts, they are often stored in glass cases and out of the hands of visitors (and researchers).

Materials on display are most easily damaged by improper lighting and, of course, the damage is irreparable. Before placing any archival matter on exhibit, museum staff should be aware of correct procedure. (A concise, but comprehensive guide is *Archives & Manuscripts: Exhibits* by Gail Farr Casterline, SAA Basic Manual Series [Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1980].)

Montana Historical Society Archives

One of the early actions of Montana's first Territorial Legislature, in 1865, was the creation of the Montana Historical Society. As created, it was a quasi-governmental agency charged with the preservation and documentation of the early white settlement of the region. In the Territorial period, with the support of a significant element of the original settlers of Montana, the Society evolved into a semi-private library, with a collection of pertinent books, territorial newspapers and manuscript materials.

With statehood, the Society became an agency of state government, and when the capitol's construction was completed, the Society was given quarters in that building. Generally staffed by pioneers or their descendants, the Society continued to evolve as a library with an increasingly significant manuscript collection. After World War II, the Society was reorganized and given its own building, while adding a publications program and a formal museum. Professional staff was added, and increasing emphasis was given to the acquisition of primary source material on Montana and the region.

Beginning in the early 1970s, professional staff was added specifically for operation of the manuscripts program, although it continued to be attached to the Library administratively. In 1977, a reorganization of functions took place which created a separate Archives/Manuscript program which also had responsibility for historical photographs. With this reorganization, a significant addition of staff for the program also took place. Major attention was given to the continuing development of procedures and activities which had begun earlier in the decade. Within the establishment of procedures, major empahasis was given to the processing of the staggering backlog of materials acquired since the Society's funding.

Collections: The manuscripts program currently houses approximately 5,500 cubic feet of material dating 1780-1980, with the bulk of the material dating after 1862. The strengths of the collection include immigration and settlement, the Indian Wars period, the mining industry, general economic development to 1920, social history and politics. Most areas of Montana are documented to a greater or lesser degree.

The Montana Historical Society Photograph Archives maintains a photographic collection of approximately 140,000 photographs and negatives (prints, postcards, slides, glass and film negatives) and 92 films. Of these about 38,000 have been catalogued. The remainder have been re-sleeved, sorted and accessioned, but are without finding aids.

Staffing: There are four archivists working with paper records. They are assisted by one paraprofessional. The photographs are the charge of a curator, assisted by a paraprofessional and a darkroom technician. The oral history component of the program consists of one interviewer and a half-time clerical. All of the professional positions are staffed by individuals with masters degrees or double masters and who have attended some form of specialized training in the filed. Further professional exposure comes from attendance at specialized seminars, professional meetings, and conferences. These activities are pursued as funds are available.

Storage: Records and manuscripts are stored in approximately 12,000 square feet of stack space. These areas are fully shelved with both industrial and braced library-type shelving. Storage areas have controlled humidity and temperature which allows optimum conditions for paper storage. All materials, excluding oversize volumes, are stored in Hollinger acid-free document cases. Folders used are also from Hollinger.

The major problem with the Society's archival storage is the increasing need for additional space.

Security: The Society's headquarters, the Veterans-Pioneer Memorial Building, is protected by intruder alarms and motion detectors. In addition, security guards are in the building from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Locks and combinations are changed annually. During hours when the building is closed and secured, the Capitol complex security force maintains a walking patrol with a check-in station at the Society's building. The alarm systems have both internal warning systems as well as being wired directly to the police department about one mile distant.

The building has a complete zoned fire detection system. This is primarily based on smoke detectors, but also utilizes some heat detectors in certain areas. This system has internal warning systems as well as being wired directly to the City fire station some six city blocks away.

Internally, all collections are housed in storage areas which are not open to the public. Requests for materials are relayed to the storage area and the materials are logged out (by collection and box or volume number) and then moved to the central reading room used by library and archives patrons. A reference staff person is on constant duty in the reading room. All materials are checked upon return to the storage area. Each patron using collections is required to complete a registration form which includes a space for entering all archival materials used. This is returned to the storage area when the collection is brought back downstairs.

Acquisitions: One of the major weaknesses of the Society's manuscripts operation is the approach to accessioning. Because the program has neither a substantial travel budget nor sufficient numbers of staff, the acquisitions work is reactive rather than systematic. Stated another way, limitations force staff to follow up leads as they are provided, rather than covering the regions of the state developing leads. There are exceptions to this in certain circumstances, but this is generally the approach.

When acquired, the materials are accessioned in a traditional manner. A deed of gift is issued, with a preliminary inventory, for the donor's signature. Upon receipt of the signed deed, a donor card is completed and an accession form, with number assigned, is filled out. A descriptive entry card is also made out to allow preliminary access. The materials are then assigned to the priority list and shelved in the holding area.

Patron Use: In 1980 there were 623 research requests made in the Archives (an average of 2.07 requests per working day); in 1981, there were 696 (2.31 daily average); and 457 in 1982 (1.58 daily average). In the years 1980-1982 there have been a total of 1776 research requests (1.99 daily average).

The Photograph Archives served 967 patrons in 1980 (an average of 3.21 per working day); 1618 patrons served in 1981 (5.36 patrons daily); and 1755 in 1982 (6.07 daily). In the years 1980 to 1982, the Photograph Archives served 4,340 patrons (4.87 daily average).

Access: Processed manuscripts in the program are divided into small and regular collections. Small collections are those that are smaller in size than the capacity of a five-inch document case. These collections are processed similarly to a regular collection but described and indexed somewhat less intensively. This is done as a direct result of the quantity of material. They are still fully accessible through a short description (taking the place of a shelf list or inventory) and index entries which are included in the central finding aid.

Regular or larger collections are processed in a traditional fashion adhering to provenance, original order, and series concepts. The materials are described in inventories (container lists) and are indexed into a central finding aid.

The collection is open to almost everyone. The only exceptions are for children, younger students, and individuals who have abused their rights to use the Society's collections. Use of the collection by scholars, high school and college students, amateur and local history researchers and genealogists is encouraged.

Copying Facilities: For patrons, the reading room has a dry bond paper copier which can be used by the individual. For a slight increase in cost, limited copying will be done by the staff. Photographic copies of documents and other materials can be provided by the Society's darkroom.

Through state government's centralized microfilm service, copies of material already on film can be provided within forty-eight hours. Filming of materials not previously microfilmed can be negotiated with the state archivist, with the work to be done either in-house or at centralized microfilm.

The Society owns both a planetary and rotary microfilm camera, either one of which can film both 16mm and 35mm formats. These cameras are used primarily for copying material that has been loaned to the Society. They are occasionally used to provide microfilm copies of material for patrons, but most of that work is done by centralized microfilming. Lack of staff has caused a substantial cutback in in-house microfilming over the past five years.

Finding Aids: The central finding aid is a cumulative sheet system (as compared to the more common card catalog) which was adopted to aid cataloging for small staff. It is modeled after the system devised and used by Richard Berner at the University of Washington. It has been modified in that entries are more traditional, being derived from headings found in Library of Congress publications. This "sheet catalog" plus all collection inventories are housed in the central reading room. All manuscript material is catalogued in this fashion as are also manuscripts on microforms, oral histories, and state records.

Hard copy and microfilm collections are also represented by inventories/container lists which are patterned after those done at the Historical Society of Wisconsin. Some of these also contain an internal proper name index so that the inventory might be used at libraries elsewhere.

The Society manuscripts program is represented in a published guide, "Guide to Manuscripts in Montana Repositories." This publication is now somewhat dated and plans are being made to produce a new guide in the next two years. In preparation for that, each collection is also described on a guide entry card which is alphabetically filed with the program. These entires will eventually be the basis for the next published guide. In the interim they serve as an internal control device.

Education and Outreach: The Society operates, in conjunction with Carroll College of Helena, an internship program for promising senior history majors. This has been in progress for six years and has proved highly valuable both for the student and the Society. Occasionally, students from other Montana colleges have also taken part in the intern program. While not designed to prepare students for a career in archives and manuscripts, the program does provide a professional experience and has been of worth in assisting students with graduate level courses in archives and manuscripts.

Because of the small population in Montana and the few number of repositories, most outreach and educational work has been directed to the nonprofessional working in a small repository at the local level (public library, county historical society, etc.) This is a logical extension of the program's responsibility to preserve the documentation of Montana's history, for a significant portion of this documentation is in the hands of organizations with little experience in handling materials.

Conservation: The Society has three people on staff with some training in the conservation of paper. One of these has had a significant

amount of training. The Society does lack an acceptable laboratory facility or even a facsimile of one. An area has been set aside to do some work, but it is far from adequate. The other problem is that, even though some staff members have experience in the area of conservation, they already have a variety of other responsibilities and cannot, therefore, give much time to work with damaged documents. In summation, while there is some capability for conservation within the program's structure, it can only be minimally used.

State Archives

Since the later 1930s or early 1940s, the Society acted as an informal repository for a minimal amount of records of state government. There was no statute governing the disposition of records in that period, and the first legislation, in 1951, only established a committee mechanism for the disposal of state records. This first legislation did not work well, with poor agency compliance and apparent wholsesale approval of records disposal requests.

Because of this situation, the Historical Society, working with the Legislative Council, determined to establish a State Archives program for Montana. This was done in 1969, with the Society being designated as the State Archives. This legislation also authorized the Society to initiate a records management program.

For the first three or four years, little was done to implement this law. Using a modified records disposal statute and the State Archives law, a more orderly procedure for the disposal of records was instituted, but still relatively few permanently valuable records were deposited with the State Archives. In 1973, recognizing the Society's inability to cope with both the records management function and the state archives responsibility, the legislature amended the statute to assign records management to the state's Department of Administration.

In 1974, the new program head determined to increase the emphasis placed on the accessioning of permanently valuable state records and to establish systems for description, retrieval, and accessioning. With this emphasis, a great amount of records was accessioned into the archives in the following three years. From 1977, when the staff of the program was substantially increased, a significant portion of available time has been expended on working with state records. At present, with established methods and systems, the handling of state records is relatively routine, within the limitations of available storage, funding, and staff time.

Security: Because the state archives materials are stored in the same area as the manuscripts collections and are used in the same reading room, the security situation is the same in both instances. (See above for a discussion of program and building security measures).

Staffing: Because the state archives and the manuscripts collections are administered in a combined program, the four archivists working with paper records are not assigned to one aspect of the program or the other. Work is assigned and performed on a priority basis. The accessioning of state records is the responsibility of one person on a permanent basis.

As discussed in the manuscripts portion of this evaluation, all members of the professional staff have a masters or double masters with specialized training in the field. Further professional exposure comes from attendance at specialized siminars, professional meetings, and conferences.

Holdings: Because of the long period of neglect of the permanently valuable records of territorial and state government, little survives from the years before 1940. Most drastically, almost nothing survives of government before 1900. This situation has forced a policy of retaining all records of the period 1864-1900, no matter how trivial their nature.

Public records statutes, as currently written, cover only executive branch agencies. A workable informal relationship has been arrived at with the Judicial and Legislative branches to deposit their permanent records with the State Archives. The Secretary of State, traditionally a major keeper of records for state government, holds several series which would probably more logically be deposited with the State Archives.

Major holdings of the program include an almost complete run of the papers of the state's governors since statehood; a run of the minutes of the legislative committees since 1959; docket files for the supreme court, beginning with the territorial period; and a good representation of records from most agencies, but usually dating from the post-World War II era. Taken as a whole, and recognizing the problems inherent with the late establishment of the State Archives, the range of holdings of the program is very reflective of state government and capable of supporting a wide variety of research.

Accessioning: Materials are transferred to the custody of the State Archives by three general methods. First, a significant amount of annual

accessions comes from direct contact with agencies, primarily legislative and judicial, but also from the offices of elected officials such as the attorney general. Another means of effecting transfer is through the review of records disposal requests for unscheduled records. The State Archivist is a statutory member of the state records committee and must sign off on the disposal of all records. In this way, certain types of records are denied disposal and, instead, are transferred to the State Archives. A third method of transfer is achieved directly by agencies or from the records center.

This multiple approach to the accessioning of records is necessary because of the slow development of complete records schedules and the necessity for informal agreements between the Archives and the Legislative and Judicial branches. The approach works about as well as can be expected until complete schedules are developed and each agency inventories all records in its control.

Once transferred, the records are usually reboxed and a preliminary inventory is generated. A certificate of transfer is issued to the depositing agency, and the records are entered into a cumulative log and numerical listing. A consecutive number is assigned to all transfers. This number is used both for storage and for identifying the individual file which will be kept on the transferred records.

Storage: All state archives are stored in the same area as the manuscript collections. (See above for discussion of storage facilities)

Access: All materials are open for use except for that small percentage covered by state confidentiality statutes. As with the manuscript holdings, state archives are available for use to the general public with the exception of smaller children and younger students. Access is gained to state records in a fashion similar to that for the manuscript collections. General inventories by box contents are often sufficient, although in some cases (such as the records of the Constitutional Convention) more detailed inventories are produced.

Indexing for state records is included in the central sheet index system. (See above discussion.) An entry card is also generated for each accession, which is kept both to provide immediate internal access and to be used as the entry for a planned guide to the holdings of the State Archives.

Copying Facilities: The availability of various copying capabilities has been discussed in the section on the manuscript operation. (See above.)

Archival Microfilming: The use of microfilm as either a storage or preservation tool has not been heavily pursued by the Society to date. The State Archives has cooperated with the Supreme Court for the past four years in the conversion to microfiche of all the docket files presently stored with the Archives. This will ultimately release some 3000 cubic feet of storage when the project is completed. About thirty percent of the files have been filmed at this time.

An appraisal of holdings has also been done for all materials in the archives facility, with the goal of identifying record series that can be microfilmed. Funding has not allowed the project to actually proceed. It is hoped that eventually this initial filming plus continued filming of other records will take place and become an ongoing feature of the program. Centralized microfilming has a very broad capability and can provide a wide variety of microfilm services. The monitoring of quality for their operation is quite good with mandatory density testing and a weekly random methyl blue test to determine the extent of any residual processing chemical.

Conservation: The status of conservation and document preservation efforts is exactly the same for state records as it is for manuscripts. A discussion of the situation can be found above in the Montana Historical Society Archives segment of the report.

Education and Outreach: The staff has been less active in this area than in conjunction with manuscript operations. Cooperation has been given to the Records Management program in assisting in their seminars for agency records coordinators. Staff has also assisted individual agencies with records matters.

Some assistance has also been provided to local government records officers, although this has been infrequent. The program is committed to offering a seminar, probably next summer, to local government officers on means of dealing with a variety of records problems, such as inventories, scheduling, preservation, and storage.

Essential Records: Montana does have an essential records statute (Montana Codes Annotated 2-6-206) which directs the identification and security of records essential to the continuity of government. Conditions in the state's records management program have not allowed this activity to progress. (See below for a discussion of the programs of the records management bureau.)

Records Management

The state of Montana had no records management program previous to 1969. It did have a records disposal act, with multiple review, which was first passed in 1951 and heavily amended in 1959. This law served only to clear extraneous, and usually valueless, paper from state offices. In 1969, when the Historical Society was designated the State Archives for Montana, records management was also made part of the program's responsibility. Without staffing or funding, the task was beyond the program and little was done other than the regularizing of the records disposal process. Recognizing that the situation would probably not improve if left with the Society, staff and administration asked the Department of Administration to accept responsibility for records management. This change was accomplished by legislative action in 1973. That year, staff was hired and a building was acquired. In subsequent years, staff was increased, and equipment necessary to operate both a centralized microfilm operation and a computer output microfilm service was acquired.

While the program now operated by the Department of Administration has expanded and is providing several necessary services, it has a basic flaw that hinders its operation. That flaw is its source of funding. When the program was transferred to the Department of Administration, a reasonable percentage of its budget was a general fund appropriation, with the remainder coming from cost recovery charges for some services. With each succeeding legislative session, the amount of general fund appropriated to the program was decreased. In 1979, the program lost its last general fund support and was put on a total cost recovery basis. This had two effects: it has almost virtually eliminated consultation and scheduling work with individual agencies, and for many agencies, services such as records storage have been put beyond their means. A less obvious consequence is the encouragement of filming marginal records series simply to achieve the funding necessary to keep the operation staffed and functioning. In total, the program will continue to have problems in meeting all obligations until its funding is reassessed.

Storage facilities: The building the program has operated for the last four years is more than adequate for its needs and, in some senses, is actually close to ideal. Its present shelf capacity is about 14,600 cubic feet with an additional floor (serviced both by stairway and freight elevator) which can be shelved and used when necessary. These storage areas have heat and smoke sensors and are tied into the direct alarm system. There is a large vaulted space, with a Halon suppression system, for the storage of computer tapes and master microfilm.

The same building has office space, a reading area, and work space for the microfilm aspect of the program. The building, formerly a warehouse, is located near the railroad yards and is about one-half mile from the Capitol complex.

Microfilming: Probably the most successful aspect of the program's operation, microfilming has generally proven of great worth to the state in general and to individual agencies. Prior to the establishment of centralized microfilm service, either individual agencies purchased their own cameras and produced their own film, usually with no regard to standards, or agencies would ignore the potential of microfilm applications and simply retain large amounts of cumbersome and sometimes extraneous paper.

Records management offers filming capabilities in all formats with all allied equipment to produce notched jackets, microfiche, and maps and aerial photographs on aperture cards. The program also processes film and produces duplicate diazo use copies. Its technical services are very good and this aspect of the program is of generally high quality. It tests all produced film for density as a matter of course and randomly tests with methyl blue on processed film, on a weekly basis.

The computer output microfilm aspect of the program was just instituted a year ago to centralize this activity in government and to avoid excessive wastage of funds by agencies using private contractors for this service. The equipment purchased is of high quality, and users have been complimentary of the service. It has probably not been in operation sufficiently long to assess its role in the program.

If a criticism must be leveled at the microfilm operation of the Records Management Bureau, it is that too often agency records are microfilmed when the value of such an effort is marginal. Because of the cost recovery nature of funding for the Records Management Bureau, too much pressure is placed on the program to "make money" to keep the Bureau in operation. Thus, the staff has approved and completed microfilm applications that were probably not merited. This is not to suggest that the Bureau is actively seeking "just any" microfilming business, but rather that they are not applying records management values as rigorously as they might.

Schedule Development: General schedules for common records of state government were developed more than three years ago. They have been readily available as a separate publication and as Montana Administrative

Manual 1-1300 to all governmental agencies. This general schedule includes 156 series for records which all agencies would generate or accumulate.

Schedules for records unique to an agency (Special Schedules) are being written and approved very slowly. In the three years since the commencement of the scheduling project, only two agencies have completed schedules for their records and had them approved. This amounts to only an additional 175 records series. The major problem with the program is, again, the source of funding for the Records Management Bureau. Since the program is totally cost recovery for funding, extra money is not generated which would pay the records analysts necessary to direct scheduling efforts. Thus, the project is deprived of the staff who would provide the direction, consultation, and follow-up to agencies making the records inventory and preparing the schedule worksheets.

As a stopgap, each agency has been required to appoint an agency records coordinator who, among other duties, is to oversee the preparation and submission of agency special schedules. These individuals must accomplish this responsibility while also serving in a regular capacity with the agency. Records Management can provide little assistance or direction and, in consequence, little progress is being made on scheduling.

Adequacy of Schedules and Agency Compliance: As noted above, the coverage of scheduling for government records in Montana is totally inadequate. Those schedules that are completed and approved, particularly the general schedules, serve their purpose very well, but the great bulk of records remains unscheduled. For this obvious reason, most records either remain in offices or are disposed of through records disposal procedures for unscheduled records.

The schedules that are in effect have been reviewed before approval by the state records committee which is made up of representatives of the Attorney General, the Historical Society, the Legislative Auditor, and the Director of the Department of Administration, who bring a variety of concerns to the process. For that reason, the existing schedules do address the gamut of concerns which can be applied to the management of records.

Within the framework of both the existing schedules and records committee review of disposal requests, agency compliance has improved significantly in the last five to ten years. This is the result of a higher visibility program, the appointment of agency records coordinators, the publication of a records management manual, and greater support from

government administrators. Major flouting of record laws was common eight to ten years ago, but this has almost ceased in the past few years. It will not be an ideal situation until all records are inventoried, scheduled, and when the records management bureau can take a more active role in the seeking of solutions to records problems.

Records Center Performance: The major stumbling block to the records center in fulfilling its role for government is the fee that must be levied for all records stored in the facility. Because the legislature neither appropriates general fund money to the bureau to operate the center nor to individual agencies to allow them to take advantage of its capacity, the facility will always be underused. This situation, of course, leads to inefficient use of records, poor storage of records, and the potential to lose records before their useful life has expired.

Beyond that major problem, the records center performs adequately. It provides safe storage for records. Its retrieval systems are not unusual but are very adequate. Pulling, delivery, and refiling services are all available from the bureau. All service requests are responded to within twenty-four hours. The center averages slightly over 600 delivery requests annually. On-site reading facilities are also provided which, taken with other services available, offer most agencies better access to their records than if they were still stored in their offices.

Projection of Future Needs: While currently shelved to a capacity of 14,600 cubic feet, the available space in the building would allow an additional capacity of approximately 30,000 cubic feet. While not a large capacity by some standards, it is more than adequate under present circumstances. Should the program improve efficiency with the hiring of additional analysts and the dropping of the storage fee, the capacity would probably serve for an additional four to five years. After that eventuality, space, with the capacity of an additional 100,000 cubic feet, would have to be added to the current facility.

Impact of New Technology: As noted above, vaulting for storage of computer tapes has been added to the records center within the last three years. In addition, the program's involvement with computer output microfilm, while only a year old, promises significant savings to the state as applications are increased.

The records management function for the state of Montana is committed to maintaining currency with technological developments as they affect the formats of records and their storage. It will only fall short where money becomes an excessively limiting factor.

Montana State University Archives and Special Collections Department

Seeds for the MSU Archives were planted about 1920, when President Atkinson ordered all records to be kept 25 years before being discarded. By the early 1950's, masses of paper occupied various closets, attics and hay lofts around campus. Suspecting that these records might have historical significance, President Renne asked the Library to organize an Archives. A temporary Archivist was hired (1954-1957) to locate and process these collections. Little more was done until 1968, when a permanent Archivist was added to the staff. In 1972, the Archivist was also given responsibility for records management on campus.

Over the years the Library developed a small rare books collection. In the early 1960's this grew to include primary source materials related to the major fields of study at MSU. The book collection expanded greatly with the purchase of Alexander Leggat's library in 1963. At the same time a Special Collections Librarian was hired, and began soliciting manuscripts under a grant from the Hill Foundation.

Holdings: Historical records in the Renne Library are divided between the Archives and Special Collections departments. The Archives collects historical records and photographs of the University, the Agricultural Experiment Station and the Extension Service. Its holdings include 6000 cubic feet of records, 12,000 photographs, and 2,400 theses. It is especially strong in the history of the University and in twentieth-century agriculture in Montana.

Special Collections collects Montaniana, including books and pamphlets, architectural drawings, unpublished manuscripts, audio tapes, maps, photographs, and business records. It includes the WPA Federal Writers Project files, architectural drawings collected by the Montana Institute of Architects, and book collections on Montana history, Northwest history, Yellowstone National Park, agricultural history, and Abraham Lincoln.

Finding Aids: Collections in both departments are easily accessible through a variety of finding aids. Archives lists all collections by general subject area in a card catalog. Inventories of folder headings

are available for most collections. Clippings and ephemeral materials are filed in vertical files.

In Special Collections, manuscript sets are also listed by main entry and subject in a card catalog. Most of the books are listed in the Library's public catalog, and eventually all will be. Clippings and pamphlets are filed by subject in the Montana History Vertical File. Some of the more important collections have been listed in the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections.

Patron Use Count: During the 1981-1982 academic year, Special Collections served more than 1,100 patrons (probably many more, as not everyone remembers to sign in). They included students and faculty in History, Architecture, Earth Sciences, Archeology, Native American Studies, Montana Literature, Film and TV Production, and local genealogists. The Archives, which is only open in the afternoon, recorded approximately 400 patrons, mostly university staff and students.

Funding: Both departments are funded through the Library's budget. Support is adequate for supplies and equipment. Special Collections is allocated funds to purchase Montana publications, but not for soliciting manuscript collections. The Archives receives its material from within the University, and thus has little need for acquisitions funds. The Library provides some support for travel to professional meetings.

Staffing: Each department is headed by a half-time professional. Special Collections has a Library Assistant who spends 20% of her time working in the Archives. During the school year, each department receives six-ten hours a week in student help. With so little staff, it is difficult to supervise two reading areas, process collections, and provide the amount and variety of services expected.

Facilities and Equipment: Both departments are housed in well-lit, well-ventilated rooms in the Renne Library. The temperature in the Archives is maintained between 70 and 80 degrees by the Library's heating and cooling system. Special Collections has a separate system which keeps the temperature around 68 degrees. Both departments use warehouse shelving, library shelving, and vertical files in different amounts as appropriate to the material housed there.

The Library owns a Kodak planetary microfilm camera which both Archives and Special Collections use occasionally. At present neither

department has the staff to microfilm collections, but materials can be filmed on demand. Other facilities are available in the Library or nearby on campus for reproducing documents, photographs, and architectural drawings.

Security: All doors to Special Collections must be opened with a key from either side. The reading room is under constant observation, and the stack area is closed to patrons without authorization. The Archives reading area is also supervised. The University departmental staff have access to their records in the stacks. The anonymity of archives boxes on warehouse shelves provides additional security for restricted materials.

Education and Outreach: Neither department has a formal educational program, but the Special Collections Librarian and the Archivist do what they can informally. Tours of the facilities highlighting the strengths of the collections or the visitors' particular interests have been given to classes in History, Montana Literature, Architectural History, Earth Sciences, and Business Records Management. On occasion they supervise independent study projects or internships for history students. The Library needs a friends group that Special Collections can tap for leads on new manuscript collections.

University of Montana Mansfield Library Archives/Special Collections

As a result of an expanding graduate degree program and the inability of the Montana Historical Society to handle student research projects at that time, the faculty of the University of Montana History Department, in the fall of 1968, successfully petitioned the president of the University for funds to establish an archives within the University library. The University already had in its possession some 500 linear feet of the papers of U. S. Senators James E. Murray and Joseph M. Dixon, plus several small collections. These were stored in boxes and file cabinets in various buildings on the campus. In addition, the library had been promised the papers of Congressman Arnold Olsen, the congressional papers of Mike Mansfield, and the papers of former ambassador to Germany James W. Gerard. The archives was initiated with a staff of one full-time archivist and a small number of student assistants. The archives program has expanded its collections and its services over the following fifteen years.

Today, the archives department housed in the Mansfield Library contains a variety of historical documents ranging from architectural

drawings of University buildings to a commission signed by the Emperor Napoleon. The holdings can be divided into the following categories:

1. University Archives. The department has approximately 420 linear feet of University archives material of which less than a third is processed.

2. Manuscripts. The department has approximately 6,450 linear feet of material. Approximately 2,646 linear feet have been processed.

3. Photographs. The photo collection consists of over 18,000 photos of which 12,000 have been processed and catalogued.

4. Oral History. The oral history collection has grown to over 800 cassettes and 153 reel-to-reel tapes. Many have transcripts and all have tape counter indexes. There is a published guide to the collection.

5. Microfilm. As some families refuse to physically part with personal papers, many have allowed the department to borrow and microfilm them for the use of Montana researchers. The department has also microfilmed several University publications. There are 226 reels of microfilm in the collection.

6. Theses and Dissertations. University policy provides that a copy of all theses and dissertations be placed in the University Archives. This collection goes back to the beginning of the graduate program.

7. Mike Mansfield Collection. The Mansfield Library has received and has placed in the archives works of art and memorabilia donated by Mr. and Mrs. Mike Mansfield.

Finding Aids: Archives materials are easily accessible to the researcher through a variety of finding aids. The department is about to publish a revised guide to its processed collections. This guide will contain entries on the 103 large and 251 small collections.

A multi-volume index of people, subjects, and dates is available for use with the manuscript collections. Each large collection also contains a shelf list which breaks down that particular collection in a logical and organized manner. Important sub-groups within the collection are also listed.

Processed photo materials are indexed in several ways in a special card catalog. They are listed by subject, by an identification number, by photographer, and by photographic collection. All are cross-referenced through the use of identification number.

A new guide has just been issued to the department's oral history collection. An index by subject and geographic area is included.

Funding: The archives receives its funding through the Mansfield Library budget.

Staffing: The University employs one full-time archivist who is responsible for organizing the material, soliciting manuscript collections throughout the state, and supervising student employees.

Depending upon available funds, a number of assistants (student) are hired each quarter. These are primarily work-study students who work between ten and twenty hours per week. The archivist is responsible for their training and supervision. Currently there are five assistants employed.

Patron Use Count: The archives share a research reading area with Special Collections. Researchers are asked to register upon entering. A total of 2,312 did so during the 1981-1982 academic year, and of these 487 were specifically doing archival research. This is a somewhat misleading figure as many do not register unless personally advised to do so, and many who state their purpose as use of Special Collections also consult archival material. The archives is open Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; Sunday through Thursday evening, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.; and Saturday, 12 noon to 6:00 p.m. Archives student assistants are responsible for supervising the Special Collections and archives reading room during these times. This is in addition to their processing duties.

Facilities and Equipment: The archives area is a closed, humidity- and temperature- controlled area on the first level of the Mansfield Library building. The material, processed and unprocessed, is stored in

this area and microfilming and oral history equipment are also housed in this area.

Negatives, oversized prints, and prints without negatives are kept in file cabinets in the photo storage room, also a temperature- and humidity-controlled facility.

A workroom or processing room and a research area are shared by the Archives and Special Collections.

Security: The archives are closed to all but library personnel. All materials must be used in the research area which is supervised at all times. All areas are locked when not in use.

Education and Outreach: A course in archival use and management is taught under the history department. This is a three-credit course dealing with the techniques of collection acquisition, organization, and description. Oral history techniques are also covered, and the students are expected to go into the field and collect oral history.

Archives personnel present workshops on photo and document preservation to local history societies or groups and to other interested people.

CONCLUSIONS: PROBLEMS AND PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Local Government Records Management

Montana's archivists, researchers, and records managers alike are concerned with the growing lack of storage space for local government records. This is an issue which, unless soon resolved, will even further complicate efforts to preserve and make accessible our vast quantities of information. A priority for future action must include more effective use of existing space.

It will be necessary to establish and enforce comprehensive retention schedules for all records series generated and housed by local government offices. This can be done by supervising state agencies in cooperation with the Montana Historical Society and by specifying in any legislation which generates records a corresponding provision for its disposition. Furthermore, the State Archives should more actively collaborate with local government officials in providing consultation regarding space, preservation, and the quality of microfilm, etc. Regional repositories should be established at Montana's institutions of higher learning which, by storing and processing records of special historical value, would alleviate the burden on the county and municipal level. Such a program could use as a model the Texas Historical Resources Depository Program and the Georgia Archives and Records Management Project, in addition to the proposed Montana Historical Records Network. (See appendix.) A field archivist, working through the State Archives, could provide valuable in-service staff training on a local or regional basis throughout the state.

School boards must be made more accountable for their records. A field archivist could assist local superintendents in retrieving missing material and, more importantly, in instituting a state-wide program for microfilming old and new records.

Any remedial action must be devised with the full collaboration of local government officials. There is a justifiable reluctance on the part of local records keepers to give up material which has special historical meaning to the area of origin. Correspondingly, these officials hold, also defensibly, that the current plights of local government records has, in itself, been complicated by careless legislation.

Local Historical Societies and Museums

While no single manuscript collection held outside the three major archives repositories can be said to have exceptional or extraordinary research value, collectively Montana's historical societies and museums could provide a rich offering of material reflecting, from a regional perspective, Montana's development since its days as a territory. However, far too many of these records are inaccessible, due not so much to neglect as to a misunderstanding of the nature and use of archival documentation.

An educational outreach program operated as an extension of an archives network could work to remedy current museum practices and, at the same time, encourage local citizens to look for these paper treasures. Such an effort could easily be coordinated with local library workshops.

Libraries

Montana's librarians are eager to develop professional skills. It is not a lack of enthusiasm which has retarded the advancement of local archives, but rather limited staff, budgets, and training. A program of educational outreach would promote advanced archival skills and procedures: records appraisal, accessioning, and processing.

Montana Historical Society Manuscripts Program

Work space has been inadequate since the expansion of the program in 1977. Storage space has decreased in availability to where the program cannot expect to continue to accession its usual annual average of approximately 250 cubic feet for more than another eighteen months. In recognition of this and other problems, the Society has requested a building addition which will primarily consist of additional storage space and office and work space. Total square footage of the addition would be another 20,000. While all of this space would not be assigned to the manuscripts/archives, sufficient space would be provided to allow five or more years of average acquisitions and additional work space for large processing projects.

The lack of a systematic acquisitions program has not allowed the Society to build its collections in areas of most need or to build to

collection strengths. Because of the reactive nature of acquisitions, a scattering of materials has been acquired over the years, which, while individually useful, do not add strength to major areas of collection. Areas of strength have been actively pursued as time and travel money permit, but the problem requires a more concentrated effort. As a solution it has been proposed (proposed to the state legislature since 1977) that the Society hire a field worker, with an adequate travel budget, to pursue a systematic acquisitions effort for the Society's collecting programs. The need for such a position has been recognized by the Society's administration and has been placed in the institution's long-range plan as a high priority. It is of immediate importance and will therefore be submitted to all future legislatures until approved.

Inadequate research usage of program collections is a problem that has continually plagued the Society. Distance and the relative isolation of Montana have discouraged many scholars from travelling to Helena and using the Society's holdings. Cutbacks in funding for higher education which have mirrored the economic problems the United States has had the past ten to fifteen years have compounded the situation. Solutions for this are difficult because much of the problem is beyond the Society's control. The Society will offer in alternate years a research fellowship to an individual who will be required to make major use of the Society's collections. This will encourage some use and should make the quality of the collections better known. The program will also publish in the next two years a guide to collections which will be distributed throughout the United States. This too will make the collections better known and, perhaps, will encourage additional research patronage. The most immediate solution the Society has undertaken to address this situation is to encourage the usage of collections by the amateur historian. This has involved some public information efforts as well as increased awareness of potential usage of collections by amateurs so that processing reflects that interest. This effort is underway and has increased patron use. The Society will continue to encourage the use of collections by other than traditional scholars.

While the Society has some small capacity for doing minor conservation work on damaged or endangered paper items, the problem has not been fully addressed. While the conditions under which collections are housed at the Society are supportive of paper preservation, there are problems with the collection that need to be corrected. Because no assessment of the conservation problems in the holdings has been done, the extent of the problem is undetermined, but is clear that deficiencies exist and must be corrected. In response to this problem, the Society has requested

funding from the legislature for a conservator and conservation operation. This request is in the long-range plan. If it is not funded during this session, it will be pursued in subsequent sessions. The proposed building addition will incorporate an equipped conservation laboratory.

State Record Program

For the same reasons as discussed under the segment on manuscripts, storage is and will be a problem for state records. The same proposed solution will serve for state records as it will for manuscripts.

Conservation is also a problem confronted both by state records and mansucripts. This has been discussed in the manuscripts segment and the same approaches to solving the problem would apply to the state records.

While the present staffing pattern is adquate for the operation of the program as it currently exists, additions will have to made in the next five to ten years. It can be assumed that operations of the records management program and the probable growth of state government will increase the annual accession rate for state records (currently running at about 300 cubic feet annually). This will require the addition of at least one professional staff member. Perhaps most importantly, an archives staffing plan must recognize the importance of machine-readable records. Montana's government has moved massively towards the use of computers in the last ten years, and systems of retention and storage, not to mention long-term access, must be developed. For this effort, the State Archives will require a minimum of one specifically trained professional in the next several years.

The Society's long-range planning process has recognized these staffing problems and the resultant plan incorporates the addition of two such staff positions over the course of the next five to eight years. For the machine-readable records specialist, another option exists. It is possible that grant funding could be sought to institute a program to handle such data, with its implementation to come from state resources.

With storage space at a premium, even with the probable building of an addition to the Society's facility, microfilming of heavy bulk types of records series will have to become a priority. A significant percentage of more modern records has worth but exhibits no characteristics which require that they be kept in hard copy form. There are also other arguments for such microfilming, such as preservation of information and

ease of access. With anticipated increases in records accessions, the necessity for utilization of microfilm technology will become more pressing in the near future.

There can be only one response to this potential problem: the infusion of increased funding into the archives budget to allow the function to progress on a systematic, annual basis.

The transfer of records to the state archives should be both more systematic and routine. The system presently operating (see above) is adequate, but not free of confusion and, in some cases, agency failure. The ultimate answer is the complete inventorying and scheduling of all records generated by the agencies of state government. This is a task outside the responsibility or capability of the State Archives, but it is an activity that the archives can support and encourage through its representation on the State Records Board. (For a discussion of this problem, see the statement on scheduling in the segment of state records management program.)

State Records Management

The problem of scheduling is actually larger than just the failure to systematically schedule records within agencies. There is a general failure to provide direction, to aid in coordination of records management efforts, and to provide consultation when necessary. Certainly, some of this is done but not nearly to the level that is necessary. This is a result of the type of funding by which the records management bureau operates. Its loss of general funds has hampered its activities in this area of responsibility. The only possible solution is to regain sufficient general fund support to allow the employment of records analysts who can make consistent progress in these areas of records management.

The microfilming portion of the program is well run and provides good service to state government. Its only flaw as noted earlier is the inclination to microfilm series which probably do not require that attention. This can be addressed by simply lifting, at least to some degree, the necessity to generate all operational funds and replacing them with general fund support.

The records center is underused and the obvious reason is the necessary charge placed on the storage of every cubic foot that is accepted by the Bureau. Neither Records Management nor agencies that might

potentially deposit records have appropriated to them sufficient money to make this program work effectively. To make this operation work efficiently and to clear useless paper out of offices and vaults, money should be appropriated either to the bureau to allow the acceptance of records without charge or to individual agencies so that they might use the records center without being hampered by a budget that does not anticipate such needs.

While Montana's public records statutes do require the identification and protection of essential records, these statutes have been largely ignored. The identification of essential records is a component of the agency inventory procedure which is intended to result in special schedules for unique records. As noted above, this effort of inventorying and scheduling agency records has been so slow a process that it effectively has retarded the essential records aspect of the statute. In consequence, the great bulk of these records is not identified, nor have provisions been made for their protection. The solution suggested above for answering the general problems of aspects of the records management operation is applicable here. Without general fund money to employ records analysts and consultants, this entire effort will continue at its present very slow and unacceptable pace.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Short-Range Agenda

Recommendation 1: Historical Records Network: Since 1976, the Montana Historical Records Advisory Council has argued the necessity of establishing a "Records Network and Cooperative Program" to overcome the handicaps of limited budgets and staffs, a large service area, and local resistance to the transfer of records from the region of origin. To insure continuity and uniformity of acquisition, processing, and accessioning, and to maintain informational and advisory services on a permanent basis, the network program should be established by contractual arrangements with the cooperating agencies and institutions. The network program will be used as a base for functions of acquisitions and educational outreach. Currently, history professors at the University of Montana and Montana State University have included instruction on the use of local government records. Such training could be expanded using the Texas Regional Historical Resource Depository Program as a model. This could relieve staff and budget pressures on local archives, and at the same time, provide valuable skills to students. (A more thorough outline is found in "Montana Historical Records Network" in the appendix.)

Recommendation 2: Central Data Base: The failure of the state's informal archives to report their holdings is a major impediment to research. Montana should establish a central data bank listing the holdings of all Montana repositories. The assessment project has provided a cursory registry of manuscript material held by museums and historical societies throughout the state. It may be necessary to develop a form similar to that used by the National Catalog which, when completed by the

various repositories, will be filed with and processed by the staff of the Montana Historical Society. This will provide researchers with an inventory of available primary sources. It will be necessary to develop printed guidelines to accompany the form to avoid error and to insure uniformity. The completed forms will be hand-managed by existing staff of the Montana Historical Society. The information should be computer-based as soon as possible.

Recommendation 3: Educational Outreach: Many of the deficiencies in Montana's historical records "system" are the direct results of the lack of basic information. The staffs of local historical societies and museums, libraries, and county and municipal offices can learn to recognize records with historical significance and how to process and store them. To insure that information is most efficiently transmitted, the educational outreach program should be organized on a contractual basis between the major repositories and local institutions participating in the records network.

Recommendation 4: Conservation and Preservation: A central conservation service should be established at the Montana Historical Society which would provide, through the organization of the records network, a consulting service for the state's records repositories. There are, presently, three staff members of the Montana Historical Society with training in conservation practices and disaster relief. The Montana Historical Society Museum Department regularly provides advice to institutions on the preservation of artifacts. Local government agencies should be made aware of the availability of these services and be encouraged to take advantage of them, not only in time of emergency, but also to rectify damage caused by frequent use of records. Local government officials should also be made aware of the

importance of selecting high quality microfilm processing and other materials for preserving permanent records.

Recommendation 5: Guide to Manuscripts: To encourage research in Montana, we must make known the types and location of the state's historical records. In addition to the listing of records mentioned above, the Guide to Manuscripts in Montana Repositories (Cockhill and Johnson, 1973) should be updated.

Recommendation 6: Microfilming: To avoid the necessity of having to microfilm material of borderline value. The microfilming program of the Records Management Bureau should be relieved of the need to generate its operational funds from user fees by increasing general funding.

Recommendation 7: Essential Records: The State Archivist should begin collaboration with the Records Management Bureau, encouraging the comprehensive identification and storage of records essential to the continuity of state government.

Long-Range Agenda

Recommendation 8: Regional Records Centers: Texas and Georgia are two states which can provide models for up-dating Montana's statutes regarding historical records. The Texas law authorized the Texas Library and Historical Commission "to designate the library of a state-supported institution of higher learning...to serve as a regional historical resources depository."[13] (Wisconsin, Illinois, Ohio, and North Carolina have similar depository programs.) This program allows state colleges and universities to be depositories for noncurrent county records, relieving the counties of records occupying valuable storage space. Students, under the supervision of archivists or professors, could obtain college credits for making these records accessible for research. The Georgia law requires

that destruction of county records "shall occur only through the operation of an approved retention schedule."[14] It further mandates that "the Department of Archives and History will advise local government of records of historical value which may be deposited in the State Archives."[15] Under the same law, the state operates record centers, "which shall accept all records transferred to it through the operation of approved retention schedules, (and) provide secure storage and reference service for the same..."[16] The guiding notion is that local records are sometimes best kept in the area of origin. A similar sentiment should help guide planning in Montana.

Recommendation 9: Local Government Records Retention: Montana should expand the "Public Records Management Act" which generated a General Records Retention Schedule for most state records.[17] A model for this type of legislation is provided by the "Georgia Records Act" which requires that a retention schedule be developed for the "governing body of any county, municipality, consolidated government, or school boards" of that state.[18] The retention schedules should be developed by the Department of Administration Records Management Bureau in cooperation with county officials and the Montana Historical Society.

Recommendation 10: Field Staff: The preservation of Montana's historic records will require the attention of a full-time records management consultant and field archivist. Working within the organizational framework of the proposed records network, this staff person would organize workshops for museums and historical societies, consult with local government officials regarding the management and preservation of records, act as a liaison between state and local officials in matters of records management, and monitor compliance with records retention regulations.

Recommendation 11: Conservation: The Montana Historical Society should continue to request from the legislature adequate funding for a conservator and conservation laboratory. The conservator would work with Society materials and, in addition, be available for consultation with local historical societies, libraries, and government officials.

Recommendation 12: State Records Management: General fund support should be made available to employ records analysts to provide necessary direction to a systematic records scheduling program of all state records.

Recommendation 13: Records Storage: To encourage use by state agencies of the records center of the Records Management Bureau, general funding should be appropriated to the Bureau to permit it to accept important records.

Recommendation 14: Machine-Readable Records Staff: The Montana Historical Society should add over the course of the next eight years one machine-readable records specialist to accommodate the increasing use of such records by state government.

NOTES

1. F. Gerald Ham, "NHPRC's Records Program and the Development of Statewide Archival Planning," *The American Archivist* 43:1 (Winter 1980); 35.

2. National Historical Publications and Records Commission, "Guidelines and Goals: NHPRC State Historical Records Assessment and Reporting Projects," (Washington, D.C.: National Historical Publications and Records Commission, December, 1981): 1 (hereafter cited as "Guidelines and Goals").

3. T. R. Monturi, "Testing the Archival Stability of Microfilm," *Office* 38:4 (April 1976): 125.

4. National Historical Publications and Records Commission, "Guidelines and Goals": 2-3

5. "An Act relating to the designation, authority, and regulation of regional historical depositories; and declaring an emergency," H.B. No. 1401, 62nd Legislature-Regular Session, *General and Special Laws of the State of Texas*, 1971, 1 (Austin, 1971): 1731-1732 (hereafter cited as Texas Regional Historical Depository Act).

6. "Stated simply, *provenance* means that the records should be retained in groups which correspond to their source of creation....*Original order* means that the records are left in the original order used when they were in current use, provided there is enough semblance of order to assure easy retrieval." Wilmer O. Maedke et al., *Information and Records Management* (Beverly Hills: Glencoe Press, 1974): 350.

7. H. G. Jones, *Local Government Records: An Introduction to Their Management, Preservation, and Use* Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1980): 108 (hereafter cited as *Local Government Records*).

8. Initiated in Montana in 1936, as part of the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration.

9. United States, Federal Works Agency, Work Projects Administration, Historical Records Survey, Division of Women's and Professional Projects, Montana. *Historical Records Survey: An Inventory of The County Archives of Montana Historical Records Survey* No. 28 Madison County (Bozeman: Work Projects Administration, May 1940): 66.

10. *Local Government Records:* 164.

11. David H. Flaerty, "Privacy and Confidentiality: The Responsibilities of Historians," *Reviews in American History* 8 (1980): 5-64. See also "Draft Bibliography," *SAA Newsletter* (May, 1982): 10-11, for readings on the issue of confidentiality and public records.

12. The Montana Historical Society Archives; the University of Montana Mansfield Library Archives/Special Collections; Montana State University Renne Library Archives/Special Collections; the Archives of the Dioceses of Helena and Great Falls/Billings; the Archives of the United Methodist Churches of Montana; the Archives of the United Church of Christ, Montana Conference; and the Archives of Butte/Silver Bow.

13. Texas Regional Historical Resource Depository Act: 1732.

14. "An Act To amend the 'Georgia Records Act," approved Mar. 7, 1972 (GA. Laws 1972, p. 1267), so as to provide for the maintenance, use, preservation, and destruction of certain records; to provide for definitions; to provide for certain duties and responsibilities of certain governing bodies, offices, and officers; to provide for the destruction of records; and for other purposes," S.B. 309, Act No. 763, General Assembly of Georgia, 1981: 8.

15. Ibid: 11.

16. Ibid: 5.

17. 2-6-201 through 2-6-213, 2-15-1013 Montana Code Annotated, 1979 (Helena: Montana Legislative Council, 1981).

18. Georgia Records Act, Amended: 10-11.

LOCAL HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

MUSEUMS, LIBRARIES, AND GENEALOGICAL SOCIETIES

TABLE ONE

"Questionnaires"

	Number Mailed	Number Responding	Percent Of Total
Local Historical Societies and Museums	69	26	38
Libraries	87	23	26
Genealogical Societies	3	3	100

TABLE TWO

"Staffing"

Composition of Staff	Total Number	Staff Average
Full-time	87	2.2
Volunteer	433	11.0
No Answer	13	----

TABLE THREE

"Nature of Collections"

Number Holding		Percentage
Manuscripts	24	56
Institution's own records	35	80
Government records	16	36
Photographs	30	68
Oral histories	18	41
Printed books/pamphlets	35	80
Maps	27	61
No answer	11	20

TABLE FOUR

"Institutional Policies"

Institutions With		Percentage
Written Acquisitions Policy:	16	37
No Response:	9	17
User Records:	17	40
No Response:	10	19
Reports to Central Source:	3	1
No Response:	15	28

COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS RESPONDING TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Counties*	Consolidated**	Municipalities***
Cascade	Butte - Silver Bow	Baker
Choteau		Cascade
Custer		Chester
Daniels		Chinook
Gallatin		Columbia Falls
Garfield		Cut Bank
Glacier		Ekalaka
Hill		Eureka
Jefferson		Fairfield
Lincoln		Forsyth
Missoula		Fromberg
Powder River		Helena
Roosevelt		Livingston
Sweet Grass		Malta
Wheatland		Miles City
		Missoula
		Plains
		Plentywood
		Philipsburg
		Superior
		Walkerville

* 56 questionnaires mailed; 16 questionnaires returned. (Percentage: 59)

** In the tabulations, Butte-Silver Bow was considered a county.

*** 126 questionnaires mailed; 22 questionnaires returned. (Percentage: 18)

TABLE FIVE

"Services Requested: Counties"

Services Requested	Number of Counties	Percentage
Disposition of Old Records	3	19
Records Management Consultation	3	19
Microfilm/Microfiche	3	19
Preservation of Old Records	1	6
Local Assessments on computer	1	6
Land Records on Computer	1	6
No Services Requested	3	19
No response	5	31

TABLE SIX

"Services Requested: Municipalities"

Services Requested	Number of Municipalities	Percentage
Storing Old Records	5	28
Aid in Filing	2	11
Retention Schedules	2	11
Re-evaluation of Fixed Assets	1	5
Microfilming	1	5
Records Management Seminar	1	5
No Services Requested	2	11
No Response	8	44

TABLE SEVEN

"Areas of Suggested Improvement: Counties"

Suggested Improvement	Number of Counties	Percentage
Legislation	7	44
(re election records reform)	(1)	(6)
(re mandatory release of liens, attachments, & financing statements when paid)	(1)	(6)
(re clear, concise records scheduling)	(3)	(19)
(re specification of responsibility in state-county records management)	(1)	(6)
(re funding assistance for microfilming)	(1)	(6)
Regulation	2	13
Consultation	3	19
(re w/Secretary of State about election records)	(1)	(6)
Storage	8	50
Retention Schedules	4	25
(re scheduling reminders)	(1)	(6)
(re single schedule manual)	(2)	(13)
Microfilming	5	31
Other	0	0
No Response	7	44

TABLE EIGHT

"AREAS OF SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT: MUNICIPALITIES"

Suggested Improvements	Number of Municipalities	Percentage
Legislation	4	22
Regulation	1	6
Consultation	3	17
Storage	11	61
Access	6	33
Retention Schedules	4	22
Microfilming	5	28
Other	0	0
No Response	7	39

LOCAL GOVERNMENT RECORDS REPOSITORIES

Counties Visited	Municipalities Visited
Beaverhead	Great Falls
Broadwater	Malta
Cascade	Plentywood
Chouteau	
Daniels	
Gallatin	
Hill	
Madison	
Missoula	
Yellowstone	

MONTANA HISTORICAL RECORDS ASSESSMENT PROJECT

REPOSITORIES ASSESSED

Location	Repository
Townsend	Broadwater County Courthouse Broadwater County Historical Museum
Virginia City	Madison County Courthouse
Sheridan	Sheridan High School
Dillon	Beaverhead County Courthouse Beaverhead County Museum Association
Butte	Butte-Silver Bow Archives World Museum of Mining Montana College of Mineral Science & Technology Library
Anaconda	Tri-County Historical Society
Deer Lodge	Powell County Museum
Missoula	Fort Missoula Historical Museum
Darby	Pioneer Memorial Museum
Hamilton	Bitter Root Valley Historical Society
Superior	Mineral County Museum
Thompson Falls	Sanders County Jailhouse Museum
Ravalli	Ravalli Schoolhouse Preservation Society
St. Ignatius	Four Winds Trading Company Doug Allard's Trading Post and Museum
Ronan	Mission Valley Heritage Association
Polson	Polson-Flathead Historical Museum

Location	Repository
Kalispell	Flathead Valley Community College Library
Libby	Lincoln County Free Library
Eureka	Tobacco Valley Improvement Assoc.
Browning	Museum of Plains Indians
Cut Bank	Glacier County Historical Society
Choteau	Teton Trail Village Museum
Great Falls	Cascade County Courthouse Cascade County Historical Society City of Great Falls Great Falls Public Library
Fort Benton	Fort Benton Museum
Shelby	Marias Museum of History and Art
Chester	Liberty County Museum Association
Havre	Hill County Courthouse Northern Montana College H. Earl Clack Museum
Chinook	Blaine County Museum
Malta	City of Malta
Glasgow	Valley County Pioneer Museum
Wolf Point	Wolf Point Area Historical Society Museum
Culbertson	N.E. Montana Thrashers Assoc.
Bainville	Bainville Area Historical Association
Scobey	Daniels County Courthouse Daniels County Museum

Location	Repository
Plentywood	Plentywood City Hall Sheridan County Historical Museum
Sidney	J. K. Ralston Museum
Richey	Richey Historical Museum
Circle	McCone County Museum
Jordan	Garfield County Courthouse
Ekalaka	Carter County Museum
Baker	O'Fallon County Historical Museum
Glendive	Frontier Gateway Museum
Terry	Prairie County Museum
Miles City	Range Riders Museum
Broadus	Powder River Historical Society
Crow Agency	Custer Battlefield
Forsyth	Rosebud County Pioneer Museum
Billings	Yellowstone County Courthouse Western Heritage Center Yellowstone County Museum
Ballatine	Huntley Project Museum of Irrigated Agriculture
Hardin	Bighorn County Historical Museum
Pryor	Chief Plenty Coups Museum
Columbus	Stillwater County Historical Gallery
Red Lodge	Carbon County Museum

Location	Repository
Cooke City	Cooke City and New World Museum
Livingston	Park County Museum
Bozeman	Museum of the Rockies Gallatin County Historical Society Gallatin County Courthouse
Three Forks	Three Forks Area Historical Society
Virginia City	Charging Bear Indian Museum Thompson-Hickman Museum Virginia City Madison County Museum
Wisdom	Big Hole National Battlefield
White Sulphur Springs	Meagher County Historical Society
Stanford	Sod Buster Museum
Utica	Utica Museum
Lewistown	Central Montana Museum Lewistown Genealogical Society Lewistown Library
Billings	Rocky Mountain College Church Archives
Bridger	Bridger History Group

MONTANA STATE RECORDS STATUTES:
MONTANA CODE ANNOTATED, 1979

Public Records Management

2-6-201. Purpose. The purpose of this part is to create an effective records management program for executive branch agencies of the state of Montana by establishing guidelines and procedures for the efficient and economical control of the creation, utilization, maintenance, and preservation of state records.

History: En.82-3333 by Sec. 2, Ch. 339, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 82-3333.

2-6-202. Definitions. As used in this part, the following definitions apply:

(1) "Public records" includes any paper, correspondence, form, book, photograph, microfilm, magnetic tape, computer storage media, map drawing, or other document, including all copies thereof, regardless of physical form or characteristics, that has been made or received by a state agency in connection with the transaction of official business and preserved for informational value or as evidence of a transaction and all other records or documents required by law to be filed with or kept by an agency of the state of Montana.

(2) "State records committee" or "committee" means the state records committee provided for in 2-15-1013.

History: (1)En. 82-3334 by Sec. 3, Ch. 339, L. 1977; Sec. 82-3334, R.C.M. 1947; (2)En. by Code Commissioner, 1979; R.C.M. 1947, 82-3334(1).

2-6-203. Department of administration's powers and duties. (1) In order to insure the proper management and safeguarding of public records, the department of administration shall undertake the following:

(a) establish guidelines for inventorying, cataloging, retaining, and transferring all public records of state agencies;

(b) review and analyze all state agency filing systems and procedures and approve filing system equipment requests;

(c) establish and operate the state records center, as authorized by appropriation, for the purpose of storing and servicing public records not retained in office space;

(d) gather and disseminate information on all phases of records management, including current practices, methods, procedures, and

devices for the efficient and economical management of records;

(e) operate a central microfilm unit which will microfilm, on a cost recovery basis, all records approved for filming by the office of origin and the department of administration; and

(f) approve microfilming projects and microfilm equipment purchases undertaken by all state agencies.

(2) Upon request, the department shall assist and advise in the establishment of records management procedures in the legislative and judicial branches of state government and shall, as required by them,provide services similar to those available to the executive branch.

History: (1)En. 82-3335 by Sec. 4, Ch. 339, L. 1977; Sec. 82-3335, R.C.M. 1947; (2)En. 82-3337 by Sec. 6, Ch. 339, L. 1977; Sec. 82-3337, R.C.M. 1947; R.C.M. 1947, 82-3335, 82-3337

2-6-204. State records committee approval. The committee shall approve, modify, or disapprove the recommendations on retention schedules of all public records to determine which documents not included in the provisions of this part are to be designated public records and approve agency requests to dispose of such public records.

History: En. 82-3338 by Sec. 7, Ch. 339, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 82-3338(3).

2-6-205. Preservation of public records. All public records are and shall remain the property of the state. They shall be delivered by outgoing officials and employees to their successors and shall be preserved, stored, transferred, destroyed, or disposed of and otherwise managed only in accordance with the provisions of this part.

History: En. 82-3334 by Sec. 3, Ch. 339, L. 1977: R.C.M. 1947 82-3334(2).

2-6-206. Protection of essential records. (1) In order to provide for the continuity and preservation of civil government, each elected and appointed officer of the executive branch shall designate certain public records as essential records needed for an emergency or for the reestablishment of normal operations after any such emergency. A list of such records shall be forwarded to the department of administration. The list shall be reviewed from time to time by the elected or appointed officers to insure its accuracy. Any changes or revisions shall be forwarded to the department.

(2) Each elected and appointed officer of state government shall insure that the security of essential records is accomplished by the most economical means possible. Protection of essential records may be by vaulting, planned or natural dispersal of copies, storage in the state archives, or any other method approved by the department.

(3) Reproductions of essential records may be by photocopy, magnetic tape, microfilm, or other methods approved by the department.

History: En. 82-3341 by Sec. 10, Ch. 339, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 82-3341.

2-6-207. Certified copies of public records. (1) The Montana historical society shall reproduce and certify copies of public records in its possession upon application of any citizen of this state.

(2) The certified copy of a public record has the same force in law as if made by the original custodian.

History: En. Sec. 1, Ch. 102, L. 1979.

2-6-208 through 2-6-210 reserved.

2-6-211. Transfer of public records. (1) All public records not required in the current operation of the office where they are made or kept and all records of each agency, commission, committee, or any other activity of the executive branch of state government which may be abolished or discontinued shall be, in accordance with approved records retention schedules, either transferred to the state records center or transferred to the custody of the state archives if such records are considered to have permanent administrative or historical value.

(2) When records are transferred to the state records center, the agency so doing loses none of its rights of control and access. The state records center is only a custodian of the agency records, and access will only be by agency approval. Agency records for which the state records center acts as custodian may not be subpoenaed from the state records center but must be subpoenaed from the agency to which the records belong. Fees may be charged to cover the cost of records storage and servicing.

(3) If an agency does not wish to transfer records as provided in an approved retention schedule, the agency shall, within 30 days, notify the department of administration and request a change in the schedule.

History: En. 82-3340 by Sec. 9, Ch. 339, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 82-3340.

2-6-212. Disposal of public records. (1) Except as provided in subsection (2), no public record may be disposed of or destroyed without the unanimous approval of the state records committee. When approval is required, a request for the disposal or destruction must be submitted to the state records committee by the agency concerned.

(2) The state records committee may by unanimous approval establish categories of records for which no disposal request is required, providing those records are retained for the designated retention period.

History: En. 82-3339 by Sec. 8, Ch. 339, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 82-3339; and Sec. 1, Ch. 173, L. 1981.

Compiler's Comments

1981 Amendment: Added "Except as provided in subsection (2)" at the beginning of (1); added subsection (2); and made changes to conform to the exception.

Statement of Intent: The statement of intent attached to SB 187 (Ch. 173, L. 1981) provided: "The intent is to have the State Records Committee create by rule categories of records of minor importance for which agencies would be relieved of the burden of repetitively submitting disposal requests; for example:

(a) motor vehicle applications that are being microfilmed;

(b) inactive teacher certification records that are being microfilmed;

(c) interstate invoices in the statewide budget and accounting system."

2-6-213. Agency responsibilities and transfer schedules. Each executive branch agency of state government shall administer its records management function and shall:

(1) coordinate all aspects of the agency records mangement function;

(2) manage the inventorying of all public records within the agency for disposition, scheduling, and transfer action in accordance with procedures prescribed by the department of administration and the state records committee;

(3) analyze records inventory data, examine and compare divisional or unit inventories for duplication of records, and recommend to the department of administration and the state records committee minimal retentions for all copies of public records within the agency;

(4) approve all records disposal requests which are submitted by the agency to the state records committee; and

(5) review established records retention schedules to insure that they are complete and current.

History: En. 82-3336 by Sec. 5, Ch. 339, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 82-3336.

Part 3

Records of Elected Executive Branch Officers

2-6-301. Definitions. As used in this part the following definitions apply:

(1) "Constitutionally designated and elected officials of the executive branch of government" means the governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, secretary of state, superintendent of public instruction, and auditor.

(2) "Official records" means any paper, correspondence, form, book, photograph, microfilm, magnetic tape, computer storage media, map, drawing, or other document, including all copies thereof, regardless of physical form or characteristics, that has been made or received by a constitutionally designated and elected official of the executive branch of government in transacting his official duties and preserved for informational value or as evidence of a transaction.

History: En. 59-530.1 by Sec. 1, Ch. 441, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 59-530.1.

2-6-302. Official records management - powers and duties. In order to insure the proper management and safeguarding of official records, the Montana historical society shall:

(1) establish and operate the state archives as authorized by appropriation for the purpose of storing and servicing official records transferred to the custody of the state archives;

(2) in cooperation with the department of administration and the state records committee provided for in 2-15-1013 establish guidelines for the inventorying, cataloging, retention, and transfer of all official records;

(3) maintain and enforce restrictions on access to official records in the custody of the state archives in accordance with the provisions of this part;

(4) provide adequate housing and care of official records in the custody of the state archives to insure their proper preservation and use by the public;

(5) in accordance with the guidelines established pursuant to subsection (2), remove and destroy duplicate official records and official records of insignificant historical value from the records deposited in the state archives.

History: En. 59-530.3 by Sec. 3, Ch. 441, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 59-530.3; amd. Sec. 6, Ch. 184, L. 1979.

2-6-303. Ownership of records - transfer. (1) All official records shall remain the property of the state. They shall be delivered by outgoing officials to their successors and shall be preserved, stored, transferred, destroyed, or disposed of and otherwise managed only in accordance with the provisions of this part.

(2) A public officer may, with the concurrence of the Montana historical society, transfer to the state archives official records that he has been specifically directed by statute to preserve or keep in his office.

History: (1)En. 59-530.2 by Sec. 2, Ch. 441, L. 1977; Sec. 59-530.2, R.C.M. 1947; (2)En. Sec. 3, Ch. 102, L. 1979.

2-6-304. Outgoing officials - records management duties. (1) Within 2 years after the completion of the final term of office of a constitutionally designated and elected official of the executive branch of government, all of the official records not necessary to the current operation of that office shall be subject to storage, disposal, or transfer in accordance with the provisions of this part.

(2) All official records of a retiring constitutionally designated and elected official not necessary to the current operation of that office and considered worthy of preservation by the Montana historical society shall be transferred to the custody of the state archives within that 2-year period.

(3) An outgoing official, in consultation with staff members of the Montana historical society, shall review his official records and isolate any items of a purely personal nature. Such personal papers are not subject to this part, but they may be deposited with the official papers at the official's discretion.

(4) An outgoing official, in consultation with staff members of the Montana historical society, may restrict access to certain segments of his official records. No restrictions may be longer than the lifetime of the depositing official. Restricted access may be imposed only to protect the confidentiality of personal information contained in the records. Restricted access may not be imposed unless the demand of individual privacy clearly exceeds the merits of public disclosure.

(5) Any question concerning the transfer or other status of official records arising between the state archives and an elected official's office shall be decided by a three-fourths vote of the members of the state records committee.

History: En. 59-530.4 by Sec. 4, Ch. 441, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 59-530.4.

2-6-305. Renumbered 2-6-107 by Code Commissioner, 1979.

2-6-306. Renumbered 2-6-108 by Code Commissioner, 1979.

2-6-307. Certified copies of official records. (1) The Montana historical society shall reproduce and certify copies of official records in its possession upon application of any citizen of this state.

(2) The certified copy of an official record has the same force in law as if made by the original custodian.

History: En. Sec. 2, Ch. 102, L. 1979.

MONTANA HISTORICAL RECORDS NETWORK
Fall, 1976

The creation of a coordinated network approach to the preservation of historical documentation has become increasingly necessary with the passage of the last several years. Montana has a rich and varied history and records documenting most facets of the past still exist, but at the same time the State has a very small population and its resources are limited and as a consequence relatively little has been done to further preservation. To insure the survival of the State's heritage use of available and anticipated resources must be maximized. Such efficiency of operation calls for cooperation and coordination, not competition and independence. In the past, the Historical Society, units of the University System with archives/manuscripts programs, and private groups have competed for acquisitions, for funding, and for publicity, with slight cooperation and little thought to the ultimate goal -- preservation of the past for the future. While a state sponsored coordinated program cannot address the role of private collecting activities, it can bring together state institutions involved in this work, to adequately distribute resources, to avoid competition, to efficiently secure acquisitions, to provide documentation and services to local researchers, and to provide maximum access to students and citizens seeking primary materials, without regard to their location in the State.

Montana is extremely large, and no single program presently existing can adequately cover all of it, both in terms of acquisitions of materials and in providing research services and information. What this state must look to, as have other states, is a network of records repositories which will provide service and documentation to a region and will offer a facility for the deposit of materials of a regional nature.

Such a network would consist of the Montana Historical Society archives/manuscripts program, and the libraries of the six university units. While this does not offer a perfect geographic distribution of facilities, it will come much closer to adequate service than is presently the case.

While the Historical Society would coordinate efforts of and provide central services for the network, major guidance would come from a network steering committee or group which would consist of one member from each institution in the program. This committee would decide questions of priorities, acquisitions policies and areas (both subject and regional),

and long-range planning. It should be noted that decisions of acquisitions policy and priorities should probably be the result of a vote of two-thirds of the committee to avoid any suggestion of competition or friction.

Funding for the network program would be budgeted and appropriated separately from the budgets of the institutions to which the various archival/manuscript units would be attached. The money would be appropriated to the Historical Society under a separate program and the amounts budgeted for each unit would then be transferred to their control for expenditure. This program must go forward only as a separate entity. There should be no suggestion that monies for historic records operations should be taken from library budgets or in anyway influence appropriations for the libraries. This would not, however, mean that the manuscripts units would be removed from the control of the respective library or institution, only that funding would be separated.

The level of operations for each unit (staff, services, holdings, facilities) shall be determined by that unit, which would budget accordingly. Attempts should be made, however, to establish network-wide standards for processing, descriptive aids, and indices, to facilitate the centralization of information about the State's manuscript holdings. Such centralization and standardization would greatly facilitate reference work, particularly mail requests, and would ease the difficulties in producing cumulative state holdings guides. Work on state programs, central guides, acquisitions, etc., should be in cooperation with the Montana Historic Records Committee (an arm of the National Historic Publications and Records Commission), particularly where additional grants might be sought.

Acquisitions would be handled on a cooperative basis, with one fulltime staff member responsible for contacts and field work. This person would collect for all units of the network, with the acquisition of materials based on the areas of collection of each unit. The staff member would work out of the Historical Society and be paid through the portion of the program's budget which would be assigned to the Society. Staff members of the various units would also be encouraged to develop local contacts in their region for acquisitions and should do some field work in their immediate area to broaden their professional experience and develop better understanding of their region and their collections.

As stated earlier, within the network, the Historical Society would act as the coordinating agency with the major responsibility for operation of the system. The Society's archives/manuscripts staff would: process collections

and produce finding aids for the smaller units of the system which would not have manuscripts staff; maintain a central bank of information about all collections in the network, regardless of location; provide cooperative field acquisition services for all units of the network; if necessary, operate training and intern programs to provide necessary knowledge about archival and manuscript practices to the reference and manuscript staffs of the network units; coordinate where necessary the transfer of collections between units to insure ease of access to researchers; microfilm and disseminate copies of key collections to those units needing them for ongoing research; and generally administer the program to insure the greatest efficiency in the acquisition, preservation and use of the State's historical records.

In addition to the Society's role within the network, the archives/manuscripts staff would continue with their responsibilities within the agency. These would include: processing and preservation of the private manuscripts held by the Society, both backlog and new acquisitions; maintenance and service of the State Archives (records of State agencies, a responsibility of the Society by statute); cooperation in the State's records management programs; duties of a general historical nature, i.e., research, publication, tours, workshops, and speaking to groups.

In summation, justification for applying the network concept in Montana includes two basic considerations. First, a system such as this approaches maximum efficiency for acquiring, preserving and making available the primary sources of a large state; Montana's space will always confound the operations of historical records programs. Secondly, a cooperative network system is the most economical approach to a statewide records operation. Montana cannot afford three or four competing institutions, all trying to cover the entire state and attempting to collect in all subject areas. Cooperation also insures the best possible service to the patron by grouping materials by region and minimizing the necessity of travel to conduct research.

MONTANA HISTORICAL RECORDS ADVISORY COUNCIL

November 3, 1978

Statement of Priorities and Preferred Approaches for Historical Records Programs in the State of Montana.

Preface: Recognizing the many problems confronting historical records operations in Montana, the State Advisory Council has determined to isolate those of a major nature by this statement. Included also are several preferred approaches to these problems. The Council recognizes that these problems will change; that new ones will arise and that others may be resolved. In consequence, this statement reflects the thinking of the Council at this time and should not be considered to be valid after three years. This statement will be used as a tool in reviewing future grant applications and those applications which address most directly these concerns will be given priority consideration. This is not to suggest that other applications will be excluded from consideration for each will be judged on its own merits.

Considerations in Historic Records Programs in Montana.

1. Records Network and Program Cooperation

The minimal funding appropriated to the three or four manuscripts/archives programs in Montana has retarded operations, endangering much documentation and compounding research problems. Further, repositories in the state have operated quite independently but lack of funding has meant that they could not be effective in all areas of operation and throughout the state. Methods of cooperation must be achieved to maximize the impact of records programs in Montana.

Establish a Historic Records Network consisting of the Montana Historical Society, and the libraries of the six University units. This should be funded by state appropriations but might be funded through a grant for a short term pilot project. Such a network would cooperatively acquire collections; loan collections or copies between member institutions; delineate areas of collection (subject and geographic); and provide workshops or practicums to further train repository personnel for network operations.

Demonstrate the potential for a network cooperative approach through the operations of a field acquisitions program with a staff of one archivist working out of the Montana Historical Society. This individual would acquire mansucripts and photographs for network repositories and would serve to educate the public concerning projected network operations. This program should reflect the necessity for increased funding for operations of the network units and the potential for historic records programs throughout the state. The initial acquisitions program would be funded by state appropriations or grant monies.

To increase the scope of historic records operations in the state, thought should be given to establishing at least minimal programs at the smaller University units. Through cooperative efforts this would extend the effectiveness of historic records programs to more of the state.

2. Records of Local Government Units

State government in Montana presently exercies little authority over the preservation and disposition of records of local government (counties, incorporated municipalities, fire districts and school districts). This has led to the loss and mistreatment of a great deal of worthwhile documentation.

Develop basic retention schedules and preservation guidelines for local units after surveying selected samples of all levels of government. Such surveys and developmental work would be done with grant funding and possible increased appropriations.

Survey extant records, particularly in counties and municipalities, to gain information on surviving series, their condition and storage situation. Such a survey would probably only encompass documentation of a historical or permanent nature. As a result of the survey, guides somewhat similar to the WPA volumes would be generated. Such an effort to identify permanent records series could only be funded with grant monies.

Cooperate in and possibly foster microfilm programs to preserve crucial records particularly if their existence

is threatened. Such filming could be undertaken both by grants and with state support.

Draft and support legislation which would institute more effective systems for retention, preservation and disposal of local government records.

3. Survey Activities

Montana, a large state with a small widely scattered population, has had a relatively poor record until recently in the preservation of documentary resources. Major repositories have only made significant progress in the last ten to fifteen years in establishing and operating traditional historic records programs. As a result, small local organizations have to some degree filled the void in acquiring and preserving records and photographs from their immediate areas. Unfortunately, much of this material is unknown to potential users.

A survey conducted with grant funds, of all local historical societies, museums and public libraries with records holdings should be undertaken. Data gathered in this manner would be compiled in a guide or listing which would either be distributed or a smaller number of copies could be placed at Network unit libraries for public use.

Early in the operations of the Network system, a guide to the member units' holdings would be produced. This publication would provide a significant tool for users of Montana and Northwestern materials and would be intended for wide distribution to the interested public.

Information gathered from the above mentioned sources should be centrally maintained and added to as operations continue. Such a central file of data should probably be the responsibility of the Montana Historical Society. The Society should also establish the means to insure the continuation of reporting, probably by supplying update forms to all repositories, regardless of status. These activities, with a possible initial planning and preparations grant, could be encompassed within Society operations and appropriations.

4. Photographs and Visual Documentation

It has only been very recently that the value of photographic and visual history has been recognized in Montana. Collections exist at the Montana Historical Society, Montana State University, and the University of Montana. These institutions have begun the application of professional techniques to those photographs and other resources in their possession but monetary support is highly inadequate. Further, acquisition in this area of operation has been extremely limited and great numbers of photographs remain in private or semi-public hands.

Securing of grant funding or increased appropriations to further the processing, preservation and description of collections, many of them deteriorating, which are now in public collections. This would include the copying of glass and nitrate negatives to assure permanence of the images.

Increased acquisition efforts to add original photographs or copy prints to established collections and programs. This would be handled by repository activities and by the proposed field archivist and/or network members (see above). Grant funding would be required in some cases.

Educational seminars and workshops should be held to inform members of local historical societies, public library staff members and the interested public in methods of preserving photographs and reporting their existence. Such activities could be a part of Network operations or funded separately by grant sources.

5. Acquire and Preserve Records Reflecting Montana's History in the Twentieth Century

Montana's history encompasses several heavily romanticized periods and events. Included are the fur trade, the gold rushes, the Indian wars, the open range cattle industry, and the era of the Copper Barons. While these topics are legitimate, concentration upon them has meant that much of solid importance has been ignored or given only passing attention, particularly in the popular view. Further, acquisition, preservation and description of documentation of more "mundane" matters, particularly in the Twentieth Century, has suffered because of this attitude. This is most true of materials reflecting religious, labor, agricultural, and industrial history.

Concentrate proposed field acquisition archivist's activities (see above in #1) on the acquisition of the above discussed materials.

Concentrate operations of the Records Network units (see above in #1) on the acquisition, preservation and description of above discussed materials.

Encourage the processing, description and preservation of such collections already in repositories, or subsequently acquired, by grant funding or other means.

Conduct a series of local seminars to inform staff of county historical societies and public libraries about basic methods of preserving and describing records in their possession. This would be sponsored by existing records programs and funded by either state appropriation or grant monies.

PRINCIPLES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT RECORDS

Adopted by the
National Association of State Archives and Records Administrators
July 1982

Introduction

The National Association of State Archives and Records Administrators recognizes local government records as one of its major concerns. The importance of local governments and their records deserves renewed emphasis. During much of the nation's early history, before the expansion of state and federal services so prominent today, local governments were the most important political entities in terms of impact on people's lives. Today, many local governments have extensive home rule powers and also function as the administrative arms of state and federal agencies, delivering services and enforcing mandates from these higher authorities.

The records of local government document the origin, evolution, and current operations of local government programs. These records provide evidence on policy formulation processes and on administration of those policies. The records include information on taxation and on the management and expenditure of public funds. Information is also present on the legal rights and obligations of the government itself and on the births, deaths, marriages and property holding and legal rights of its citizens. Finally, selected local government records have enduring value for historical and other research.

The information contained in local government records is now more in demand than ever -- by administrators concerned with the origin and continuity of public policies; by citizens advocating open government and accountability of public servants; by genealogists and family history researchers tracing their "roots"; by historians studying community or regional history themes; and by other researchers studying social groups or trends in demography, land use, transportation, or economic development.

A number of factors have combined, however to limit application of sound records management and archival techniques in the creation, maintenance, disposition, and preservation of records. Local governing boards and councils often do not recognize the essential role of records in the efficient administration of modern government operations or the need for systematic records management. Local records custodians frequently take office without previous training or experience in records management

or archival techniques and the everyday pressures and duties of their offices leave them little time to give adequate attention to records issues. There are few publications and training courses on local government records management and exchange of information on workable records keeping practices is limited. As a result, records are often not as well managed as their administrative, fiscal, legal and historical importance would warrant. Important records may be difficult to locate when they are needed or they may be inadvertently discarded. On the other hand, obsolete records may be retained longer than necessary, creating an unnecessary and expensive storage burden and competing for space with newer or more important records.

This statement of principles is designed to provide guidance to local government officials and state archival and records management officers interested in improving records management and archival practices. It is intended to encourage a working partnership between state and local officials to ensure sound records management. The principles are general and must be interpreted and applied in light of state and local laws and traditions.

I. Legislation. State legal authority should extend to all the records of all local governments. State law should recognize the responsibility of state archival or records management agencies to ensure uniform procedures in the management of non-current local government records and should cover the following areas:

1. Definition of records. The legal definition of what constitutes a "record" of local government should be precise but broad enough to encompass microfilm and modern information carrying or storage devices such as electronic data processing tapes and discs.

2. Legal custody. The local government authority responsible for the custody of records should be designated. This may vary, depending on the type of government, state and local laws, and municipal charter provisions. Possibilities include the chief executive officer, clerk, department heads, or the local governing body.

3. Disposition, including destruction or transfer. Disposition procedures, including supervisory authority of the state archival or records management agency, should be spelled out.

4. Preservation and protection.

5. Microfilmed records. The law should permit microfilmed copies of records to be substituted for originals provided the standards established by the state archival or records management agency for identification targeting, archival quality, and storage are met. Such microfilm should be legally admissible in court in lieu of the original records.

6. Tampering with, defacing, or stealing records. Specific penalties should be provided for these crimes.

7. Access to researchers and the public. The law should state that records are open to the public with certain exceptions; e.g., situations when disclosure would constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, impair collective bargaining negotiations, disclose trade secrets, or interfere with ongoing police or judicial proceedings.

8. The law should provide that state and local governments may seek the return of official records that have been alienated from government custody.

II. Principles of good management. Local government administrators and records custodians should recognize the importance of the records created by local government operations and the information these records contain. Records should be managed systematically, effectively and economically.

   1. Responsibility for management, preservation, and legal disposition of records should be clearly assigned.

   2. Records should be easily accessible to government officials and to the public through the use of indexes, systematic filing systems, and other techniques.

   3. Inactive or noncurrent records should be segregated from active records and stored away from busy office areas.

   4. A vital records program should be developed to ensure the survival of records and information necessary to resume and continue government operations after a serious fire or other catastrophe.

   5. Selected records with long minimum legal retention periods, where the original record is no longer needed and a microfilmed

copy will suffice, should be considered for microfilming in accordance with guidelines provided by the state archival or records management agency. Microfilm may be substituted for the original records once state standards have been met.

6. Electronic data processing should be employed where warranted.

7. Records personnel should be trained in techniques of records and information management.

8. Obsolete records should be disposed of periodically following legal procedures.

9. Historically valuable records should be preserved in a local government archives, designated local or regional repository, or state archives.

III. Role of state archival and records management agencies. The combined state archival and records management agency should work in partnership with local officials in establishing strong records management and archival programs. When they are not combined, the actual division of supervisory, regulatory, and advisory authority between the state archives and the state records management agency should be clearly defined in each state to ensure a minimum of overlap and a common approach to local government records problems. State agencies should assume the following responsibilities.

1. Records disposition. State authorities should establish minimum legal retention periods and regulate the disposition of local government records. This responsibility can be carried out by having state authorities: (A) review and approve or veto requests from local governments for approval to dispose of specific records; (B) review and approve or modify records retention and disposition schedules submitted by local governments; or (C) promulgate and distribute records retention and disposition schedules with statewide applicability. In regulating records disposition, state authorities should consider the administrative, fiscal, legal, historical and other research value of the records.

2. Records management advice and assistance. State authorities should provide technical advice and assistance on various aspects of records management systems such as legal disposition, handling inactive records, security, protection, indexing

filing systems, storage of inactive records, and electronic data processing systems. Such advice and assistance may be provided through a combination of field visits to local government offices, workshops and training institutes, and publications.

3. Preservation of historically valuable records. State authorities should develop programs to ensure the identification and preservation of records with enduring historical or other research value. This may be accomplished through: (A) providing advice and assistance to local government to establish archival programs; (B) providing for the transfer of records to designated local or state repositories; or (C) accessioning historically valuable local government records into the state archives. Choice of a method will depend on the state's law and traditions. Whichever method is selected, the following minimum standards should be met: (A) records are systematically appraised to identify those with archival value; (B) archival records are properly protected against fire, theft, or other loss; (C) records are arranged and described according to commonly accepted archival standards; (D) records are available for research at reasonable times.

4. Consultation with state and federal agencies. State archival or records management personnel should consult with state agencies whose regulatory, supervisory, licensing, or other activity have an impact on local government recordskeeping. These personnel should also continuously monitor the records-keeping impact of federal mandates or federal programs administered through local governments.

5. Microfilming. State archival and records management agencies should take the lead in advising local government on an appropriate role for microfilm. This might include advice on: (A) microfilming records with relatively long legal retention periods and disposition of the original records; (B) microfilming of selected records as part of a vital records program; (C) microfilming historically valuable records to make the information more accessible to researchers; or (D) deterring the microfilming of disposable, noncurrent records. In each case, the state agencies should promulgate standards for identification targeting, and archival filming, processing, and proper storage, based on the standards of the American National Standards Institute and the National Micrographics Association.

In addition, state agencies may consider: (A) actually performing the microfilming of local government records; (B) performing quality checks and tests on microfilm; (C) providing secure storage for the master (camera produced) negative of the film; (D) securing a reference copy of film for research use at the state archives; or (E) securing a copy of the film for use by researchers via interlibrary loan.

6. Conservation and restoration. The state archival and records management agency should develop a statewide strategy to meet records conservation needs and the need to repair or restore deteriorated or damaged records. Such an approach might include: (A) organizing workshops or publishing manuals on conservation administration and techniques; (B) developing or designating a private or public institution somewhere in the state to take the lead in conservation training and in performing the most challenging of conservation procedures; (C) using the state records management or state archives preservation lab to perform conservation work for local governments; or (D) organizing and coordinating a statewide disaster assistance program.